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Edited by **Peter Vassallo**

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The *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* is an interdisciplinary Journal published by the Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies of the University of Malta. It is devoted to current research in the history of cultural relations between England and Italy from 1300 to the present.

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From the Editor

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'With a wild surmise': on translating Lorenzo de' Medici's *Ambra* two hundred years after William Roscoe

Corinna Salvadori Lonergan

Lorenzo de' Medici's *Ambra* is a poem in *ottava rima*, forty-eight stanzas in all, with an inner cohesion but some contradictions and illogicalities because most probably it was unrevised and unfinished. As with all Lorenzo's longer poems, with the notable exception of the *Rappresentazione*, it is virtually impossible to date. The scant evidence suggests a time between 1474 and 1486, a long stretch in a remarkably short life. Even the title is problematical. In the manuscript tradition some codices bear the title *Descriptio Hiemis*, which is strictly applicable only to the opening twenty-two octaves of the poem, nine of which are a powerful description of a flood, while the remaining octaves tell a *fabula*, the metamorphosis of the beautiful nymph, Ambra, into a rock. She arouses the lust of the river god, Ombrone, who pursues her and who calls to his aid the father river, Arno. She prays to Diana to preserve her chastity as a result of which she is turned into a rock and the lament of Ombrone who has killed the thing he loved, ends the poem. The Ambra of the title, for Lorenzo, was certainly his residence at Poggio a Caiano, which he designed with Giuliano da Sangallo, near which flows the Ombrone and the poem's physical setting is the surrounding countryside.

Surprisingly, the 'discoverer' of this *poemetto* and the man who first published it in 1791, over three centuries after it was written and who gave it the title *Ambra*, was one William Roscoe (1753-1831) of Liverpool who has remained the most unexpected editor of Lorenzo's work. He was the son of the keeper of a small public house who also ran a market garden. He received a very ordinary education 'at the common schools'[1] and at the age of twelve became assistant to his father in the cultivation of a potato ground from which he carried his produce to market

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1 William Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, called the Magnificent*. With a Memoir of the Author by William Hazlitt (London. David Bogue, 1846), ix. Information on Roscoe is drawn from the biography by his son, Henry Roscoe, *The Life of William Roscoe* (London and Edinburgh. Cadell and Blackwood, 1833). A more recent biography is D. A. Macnaughton, *Roscoe of Liverpool* (Birkenhead. Countyvise, 1996).

in a basket on his head. He was to a large extent self-educated and a strong interest in poetry emerges as a driving force from his earliest youth. He was articled to an attorney and was fortunate to form a friendship with Francis Holden, who was a man born into the privilege and education which Roscoe had not known and who was instrumental in assisting him to study Greek, Latin, French and Italian. The emphasis seems to have been on the latter with the particular intention of studying the poets of Italy.

Roscoe was still in his teens when the idea of writing the life of Lorenzo formed and took root in his mind. It was founded on the belief that if the life and character of Lorenzo were to be studied fully, he would emerge as the most extraordinary man that any age or nation had produced and that Lorenzo was 'defrauded of his just fame by posterity.'[2] He was in no position to travel to Italy, a country he was never to visit, and towards the end of 1789 he communicated to his friend William Clarke that his design to write the life of Lorenzo was impeded by lack of materials. Clarke shared with Holden privilege, education and what was probably tuberculosis. It was the latter factor that drove him to winter in Fiesole where he undertook to research on Roscoe's behalf. His starting point seems to have been Fabroni's life of Lorenzo,[3] an entirely political historical biography, which he twice perused and with zeal and diligence, as well as charm and credentials, he explored the Laurenziana and the Riccardiana libraries and obtained permission from the Grand Duke of Tuscany (without a bribe, he noted) to have access to archives and state papers in the Palazzo Vecchio. He got help from keepers of collections to gain access to MSS and there he found unpublished poems by Lorenzo. Clarke saw, judged and transcribed and, with long distance instructions from Roscoe, commissioned copyists at Florence to make transcripts. Roscoe assessed the materials he received and wrote a work, first published in 1796, that justly acquired him international fame in Anglo-Italian studies: *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.* This was followed by a *Life of Leo X* (Giovanni de' Medici, son of Lorenzo) written at the suggestion of Lord Bristol, though this later work did not quite acquire the fame of the first.

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2 From Roscoe's preface in William Roscoe, *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici called the Magnificent* (London. Scott, Webster and Geary, 1836), lxxiii.

3 Angelo Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis Magnifici Vita* (Pisis. Grazioli, 1784).

Roscoe was an extraordinary man who pursued many very different activities. He was a fearless champion of the abolition of slavery and he saw this through Parliament despite the fact that he represented a city that perceived its great wealth to come precisely from the slave trade. He contributed to the Linnean Society, producing *inter alia* a substantial work on Monandrian Plants, in part illustrated by himself, and he gave his name to two species. His involvement in banking terminated in bankruptcy in 1820 and he relied for his future support on his pen. An important work was his edition of the works of Alexander Pope with a new biography of the poet. Where Italian was concerned, he translated Tansillo's *La Balia* from *terza rima* into heroic couplets, in part, it would seem, out of commitment to promoting breast-feeding by ladies.

What is unusual about Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo* and marks its difference from Fabroni's, is the strong emphasis on Lorenzo as patron of culture, as redeemer of the Italian language and as writer. Roscoe called Lorenzo the 'restorer' of Italian poetry, the arouser of the poetic muse which was silenced after Petrarch and, like Mario Martelli some two centuries later,[4] he believed that Lorenzo was primarily a poet but his family position led him to deviate into other activities.[5] While the critical acclaim given to Roscoe's *Life* bears the marks of effusive eulogy now not fashionable, it was nonetheless deserved. He was hailed as a great classical historian, as a phenomenon in literature whose *Life of Lorenzo* was inspired by an *afflatus divinus*.[6] If, more mundanely, we look at sales, they are significant: of the 1796 edition, fifty copies were printed and sold in three days; in 1799 the second and third editions sold out and the copyright was purchased for £1200 by Cadell and Davies of the Strand, with a fourth edition in 1800. The translations were contemporaneous with 1797 seeing the German one, published in Berlin with valuable notes by the scholarly translator; the Italian translation was commissioned by Angelo Fabroni, by then *Rettore* of Pisa University and it appeared in 1799 in the same year as the French translation. The *Life* crossed the Atlantic when in 1803 there was an American edition encouraged by eminent persons in Philadelphia and other parts of the Union.

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4 Lorenzo de' Medici, *Opere* M. Martelli (ed.) (Turin. Caula, 1965), xi-xii.

5 Roscoe writes on Italian poetry between Petrarch and Lorenzo and proceeds to praise the latter in chapter 5 of the *Life*.

6 For immediate reactions to Roscoe's *Life*, see Henry Roscoe's biography, chapter 5.

The *Life* is an elegantly written, scholarly work, the fourth edition of which has eighty-four Appendices containing substantial and supportive documentation. Like all pioneering works, it has been superseded but the lasting feature of Roscoe's work is that as early as 1791, he sent to press a slim volume entitled *Poesie del Magnifico Lorenzo De' Medici Tratte da testi a penna della libreria Mediceo-Laurenziana e finora inedite* (Liverpool, 1791). It contained thirteen poems among which were *Ambra, La caccia col falcone* (currently *Uccellagione di starne*) and *Amori di Venere e Marte*. These, in the original Italian, were incorporated in successive editions of the *Life*, becoming omitted only much later, in the 1830s, when economical editions started to appear. Roscoe's *Life* was a best seller and certainly seminal where later writers in Britain were concerned. It is obvious in the Laurentian publications of Stebbing and Lardner in the 1830s, in that of John Addington Symonds (1881) and in an essay by Vernon Lee, 'The Outdoor Poetry,' published in her volume *Euphorion*, in 1884 and which is still useful reading.[7] None had the depth and acumen that Roscoe had shown in his assessment of Lorenzo's literary writings and on the whole they reworked what Roscoe had written, highlighting two points: Lorenzo's revival of Italian as a literary language and his power of describing natural objects. The enthusiasm Roscoe had for Lorenzo's writing, Vernon Lee excepted, does not reappear until Edward Lee Stuart Horsburgh, *Lorenzo de' Medici and Florence in her golden age* (London, 1908). As for Italy, Roscoe is recognised as a pioneer among the editors of Lorenzo and the seal to his work was given by the appearance of the edition of Lorenzo's writings known as the *granducale* of 1825 which included the Laurentian texts discovered by Roscoe. The text of these thirteen poems remained largely unmodified until the Simioni edition of 1913 and in the case of *Ambra,* Roscoe's text was the standard one until the critical edition by Rossella Bessi in 1986.[8]

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7 H. Stebbing, *Lives of the Italian Poets* (3rd revd. ed.) (London, 1860); Dionysius Lardner, assisted by Eminent Literary and Scientific Men, *The Cabinet Cyclopaedia. Lives of the most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain and Portugal* Vol. 1 (London, 1835); John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature* (2nd ed.) (London. Smith, Elder, & Co., 1881); Vernon Lee, *Euphorion* 2 vols. (London. T. Fisher Unwin, 1884).

8 *Opere di Lorenzo de' Medici detto il Magnifico* (Firenze. Molini, 1825), 4 vols; Lorenzo de' Medici il Magnifico, *Opere* A. Simioni (ed.) (Bari. Laterza, 1913-14), 2 vols; Lorenzo de' Medici, *Ambra (Descriptio Hiemis)* R. Bessi (ed.) (Firenze. Sansoni, 1986). I have used Bessi's edition for my translation and it is the one quoted here.

Roscoe, a man who wrote verse with ease and frequency and often translated from the Italian, seems never to have translated *Ambra* which, given the feeling that emerges from his comments on this poem, is most surprising. A contemporary of his, Susannah Watts of Leicester, published a book entitled *Original Poems and Translations from Lorenzo de' Medici, particularly Ambra* (London, 1802), which contains her rendering of the poem in heroic couplets. No other translation into English of *Ambra* seems to have appeared until John Thiem's blank verse one in 1991[9] and the present author's rendering into *ottava rima* was sent to press in 2000.[10] Our three translations differ greatly: virtually two centuries separate Thiem's and mine from Watts's; hers reflects the pre-Romantic taste for heroic couplets and has much charm, though reading it now, it has an archaic quality in its English that is lacking in Lorenzo's Italian. It is reasonably accurate, though it fails Lorenzo's original in its omission of octave 8 and in so far as the strongly sexual element in the river god's passion is deftly excised and could almost be missed as Susannah Watts's version generally, but not always, groups the heroic couplets in fours. Occasionally, they are in much longer sections according to stages in the narrative, thus one may miss her coy deletion of the final couplet in octave 26:

e quella bella ninfa in braccio avere
e, nudo, il nudo e bel corpo tenere.

He thinks that now the lovely nymph he'll clasp,
And hold her naked in his naked grasp. [CS]

And have that comely nymph within his arms,
And, naked, clasp her naked lovely body. [JT]

I fail to translate the second *bel* but I retain the sexual force on which the metamorphosis is based and which creates much of the poem's effect. *Nuda* reappears in 28/2 and in 31/8 and, again, it is avoided by Watts. I retained it in both places and exactly in Lorenzo's position. Watts's rendering of Ombrone's lament follows so that the reader can form an opinion of her work and it will be noted that the thirty-four lines of the original are reduced to thirty-two:

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9 Lorenzo de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose* J. Thiem (ed.) (Pennsylvania State UP, 1991).

10 It will appear in: *Laurentia laurus. Scritti offerti a Mario Martelli* V. Fera and G. Resta (eds.) (Messina, Centro interdipartimentale di studi umanistici, 2001). For concision the translations will be referred to as SW for Watts's, JT for Thiem's and CS for Corinna Salvadori's.

My AMBRA! see (he cries) the self-same wave,
In which thou, late, thy beauteous form didst lave!
With anguish keen thy cruel fate I moan,
And in thy lot severe forget my own-
Fain would my waters now their course forego,
In tender pity, of my AMBRA's woe!
And such, remorseless Fate! thy dire decree,
The feeling she has lost still tortures me!
Tho' on my native hills, in beauty's pride,
Unnumber'd damsels wander by my side;
Their charms no longer shall demand my care,
Nor will I chuse the fairest of the Fair;-
For *one* alone, the tender thought I'll prove,
And guard this lock, memorial of my love!
To her, still faithful, whom my azure flood,
With lucid wave in ardent chace pursued;
While she, as pale with fear she fled my tide,
In precious gore the stones and brambles dy'd;
And, cruel fault of my fond love alone,
That beauteous form becomes a rigid stone!
While I am doom'd to live-a Pow'r divine,
And conscious being must be ever mine!
Too barbarous Destiny! thy cruel rod,
Dooms me at once a wretch and yet a God!
Thus have I learn'd, sad fruit of all my care!
That soft persuasion only wins the fair.
O keen North-wind! congeal my liquid tide,
And let it stagnate by my AMBRA's side;
In semblance of my lost, transmuted Maid,
Oh! let it here, a solid mass, be stay'd,
And never Sun, with clear and golden beam,
Melt the firm chrystal to a flowing stream! [SW]

One may very well ask whether two translations within a decade are justified when no other seems to have appeared for two centuries. This translator felt a necessity to undertake the task because of her firm belief that *Ambra*'s original verse form *(ottava rima)* was inseparable from the poem's content of flood and pursuit, and that Thiem's perfectly acceptable rendering in unrhymed pentameter fails to do justice to Lorenzo as poet. What separates Thiem and myself is the most controversial point related to the translation of poetry: To rhyme or not to rhyme, that is the question; Whether 'tis nobler for a poem to suffer The loss of rhymes and find indifferent fortune, Or to live on in its old rhymes and trouble All those who would oppose them? There is an indefinable element in poetry of which some poets have spoken in musical terms as did Dante, some seven hundred years ago, who wrote in *Convivio* (I, vii) that 'nulla cosa per legame musaico armonizzata si può de la sua loquela in altra trasmutare

sanza rompere tutta sua dolcezza e armonia.' Metre and rhyme are the *legame musaico* and they must be retained if one is not to lose 'tutta sua dolcezza e armonia;' some will inevitably be lost in transposition from one language to another, but not all. There is much opposition to the use of rhyme because the result is predicted as being lifeless - Lowell's notorious stuffed bird - albeit faithful, and as the translator of Ambra's change from living nymph to dead rock, I feared my rendering would match that metamorphosis. The old aphorism of the *bella infedele* versus the *brutta fedele* like all aphoristic statements precludes questioning, but results have shown that occasionally a translation can be both *bella* and *fedele*. If one's aim is imitation or *rifacimento* then one can boast with Robert Lowell: 'My licences have been many,'[11] but if your aim is translation, then with me you retort: 'My licences have been none' although there are some failures.

To what did I remain faithful? To the metrical pace of the octave in order to do justice to the poem's meaning, as it is conveyed by Lorenzo in the precise description of winter and its roaring flood merging into a pursuit of a nymph, and her gradual change into a rock bringing the poem in an almost circular fashion back to its beginning in ice and death of nature. This is one of Lorenzo's finest poems, rich in its complexity and open to contrasting interpretations. It may be read in a strictly doctrinal manner, how sensual love can lead to the very destruction of the object of our love, as Mario Martelli has read it, or one may read in the refusal of that love the negation of life itself, as I have written elsewhere.[12] The poem's emotion is not recollected in tranquillity as it moves from stillness to turbulence in its display of fear, passion, despair, frenzy, whether in birds, animals, nymph or river gods. The *ottava rima* is most successfully used by Lorenzo for both stillness and movement with breaks and links created by the rhyming couplet as it seals each octave - its fundamental characteristic - but also gives the lead to the octave that follows and provides the rhythmic bonding. Lorenzo is a sophisticated stylist whose use of lexical repetition, alliteration and assonance, gives unity to a poem which contains, in terms of content, some lack of union. When I could not reproduce his effect in a particular octave, I tried to create it in the

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11 R. Lowell, *Imitations* (London. Faber, 1984), xi-xii.

12 Lorenzo de' Medici, *Opere* M. Martelli (ed.), xxxiii; C. Salvadori Lonergan, 'Lorenzo de' Medici's *Ambra*: due poesie diverse?' *Hermathena*, 121 (1976), 159-68.

following one, constantly driven by the fact that *Ambra*'s content and form cannot be rent asunder, hence my refusal of all compromise, even of half-rhymes, in retaining the *ottava rima*. It was necessary to vary rhymes as much as possible as Lorenzo does and thus to avoid overusing one that is very easy in English, the rhyme in -ay (*Ambra* 4: day/sway/ way) but in 48 octaves I used this rhyme only three times. To write *ottava rima* proved extremely difficult as a quatrain is easily enough composed - abab - but the extension of this to ababab often resulted in total abandoning of a rhyming scheme. The easiest to render is possibly the rhyming couplet. That of octave 26 was cited above and the three versions of 11 (7-8) that follow will enable the reader to judge, but it will be noted that my version loses some of the rich sounds of the original:

Preso il pesce nell'onda dura e chiara,
Resta come in ambra aurëa zanzara.

Th' imprison'd Fishes in the chrystal lie;
So shines, in amber set, the golden Fly. [SW]

A hard, pellucid wave immures the fish
The same way golden amber holds a fly. [JT]

What fish in strong transparent wave is caught,
Will stay, as gnat in golden amber, taut. [CS]

For another example, see octave 20 which is a weak stanza even in Lorenzo's original and my labour is obvious, but the good rhyming couplet gives a lift to a dragging octave as it takes off with the impetus of the flood:

A pena è suta a tempo la villana
Pavida âprire alle bestie la stalla;
Porta il figlio, che piange nella zana;
Segue la figlia grande, ed ha la spalla
Grave di panni vili, lini e lana;
Va l'altra vecchia masserizia a galla:
Nuotono i porci e, spaventati, i buoi,
Le pecorelle, e non si toson poi.

The frightened country-woman rushes out
To open for her precious beasts the stable;
Her daughter saves what clothes she finds about
And they hold dear; the mother, in his cradle,
Carries the babe and tries to stop him shout.
Floating go chattels, their old chairs and table;
Dowstream the pigs and oxen swim in fear
And with them sheep no one will ever shear. [CS]

Octaves 17 and 18 have subtle links of repetition and word-play that had to be conveyed: the *freme fremito* is picked up as *Shuddering shudder* - verb and noun in the same order; *spumose* in 17 is picked up by *spumano* in 18, now rendered as *frothy* and *froth*. There is interpretation in 17 (*that never knows remorse*) and therein lies a problem of difference between the languages, with English more compact and Italian more expansive; when the eight lines occasionally fit comfortably into six, one needs a

little expansion which works successfully only if in perfect keeping with the very essence of the original.

Quando gonfiato e largo si ristrigne	When swollen and dilated some strong stream
tra li alti monti d'una chiusa valle,	Restricted finds his flow by rocky force
stridon frenate, turbide e maligne	Of narrow gorge, his angry waters scream,
l'onde, e miste con terra paion gialle;	Muddied and yellow turned along the course;
e grave petre sopra petre pigne,	He shoves the stones against the rocks that team
irato a' sassi dello angusto calle;	To hold a wrath that never knows remorse.
l'onde spumose gira, e orribil freme;	Shuddering he whirls the frothy waves and sneers:
vede il pastor da alto, e, secur, teme.	From high, the threatened shepherd sees and fears.
Tal fremito piangendo rende trista	Similar shudder saddens weeping earth
la terra dentro al cavo ventre adusta:	Within the hollow of her fiery womb:
caccia col fumo fuor fiamma acqua mista	To flames that steam the waters she gives birth;
gridando, ch'esce per la bocca angusta,	A dreaded sight and sound expelled with fume,
terribile alli orecchi ed alla vista:	Bursts out of narrowest opening in earth's girth;
teme, vicina, il suon alta e robusta	Volterra's high: though strong, it fears its doom;
Volterra, e' lagon' torbidi che spumano,	In rain the fumaroles give higher froth,
e piove aspetta se più alto fumano.	The citadel is powerless 'gainst their wrath. [CS]

Giuliano Dego, the successful translator of Byron, writes that 'perché il miracolo della traduzione in rima possa accadere, oltre a una conoscenza approfondita delle due lingue è necessaria una profonda affinità spirituale tra autore e interprete.'[13] Some sequences of octaves follow to allow the reader to compare Lorenzo's effect with that achieved by the translator whose study of his poetry began four decades ago, and to determine if the *affinità spirituale* worked on this voyage undertaken with 'a wild surmise.'

Trinity College, Dublin

13 G. Dego, Byron, *Don Juan: Canto Primo* traduzione in ottava rima (Milano. Rizzoli, 1992), 42.

Octaves 35-36 Plea of Ombrone to Arno

Grida da lungi: - O Arno, a cui refugge
la magior parte di noi fiumi toschi,
la bella ninfa che come uccel fugge,
da me seguita in tanti monti e boschi,
sanza alcuna piatate el cor mi strugge,
né par che amor el duro cor conoschi:
rendimi lei, e la speranza persa,
e el legier corso suo rompi e 'ntraversa.

lo sono Ombron che le mia cerule onde
per te raccoglio: a te tutte le serbo,
e fatte tue diventon sì profonde,
che sprezzi e ripe e ponti, alto e superbo;
questa è mia preda, e queste trecce bionde,
qual in man porto con dolore acerbo,
ne fan chiar segno; in te mie speme è sola:
soccorri presto, ché la ninfa vola! -

"Arno, to whom we Tuscan rivers flow,"
He cries, "that nymph who flees as only could
A bird, from mountain height to plain below
I have pursued, as well as through the wood;
Untouched her heart by arrow from love's bow,
My heartfelt pleas and efforts she's withstood.
I beg you put a stop to her swift flight,
Catch her for me and thereby ease my plight.

Ombron am I, my swirling waves so blue
From lesser streams I gather, and I keep
My plentiful resources all for you;
They swell your waters, Arno, and so deep
They flood and scorn all banks, and bridges too.
She's mine, my prey, but all that I can reap
My hand still holds: it is her golden hair;
Aid me, I beg, she flies and I despair."

Octaves 41- 42 Metamorphosis of Ambra

Né eron quasi della bocca fore
queste parole, che i candidi piedi
furno occupati da novel rigore;
crescerli poi e farsi un sasso vedi,
Mutar le membra e 'l bel corpo colore;
ma pur, che donna fussi ancor tu credi:
le membra mostron come suol figura
bozzata e non finita in pietra dura.

Ombron pel corso faticato e lasso,
per la speranza della cara preda
prende nuovo vigore e strigne il passo,
e par che quasi in braccio aver la creda:
crescer veggendo innanzi agli occhi il sasso,
ignaro ancor, non sa donde proceda;
ma poi, veggendo vana ogni suo voglia,
si ferma pien di maraviglia e doglia.

No sooner have these words left Ambra's lips,
That 'way to Lauro by kind winds they're blown,
And some new force unknown her white feet grips:
Slowly they change and grow and turn to stone.
From limbs and body, her fair colour slips,
But still some features of the nymph are shown;
Her limbs are like a figure out of rock,
Unfinished still, rough hewn from larger block.

Ombrone's tired, exhausted by the chase;
But now he thinks he almost has his prey,
His strength renews, he moves with speedy pace,
Soon from his arms his lovely nymph won't stray.
Before his eyes the stone grows in her place:
Illusion soon to bitter truth gives way,
He's coveted in vain, all passion numb,
He stops, by wonder and by grief o'ercome.

Octaves 44 (7-8) - 48 Lament of Ombrone *(end of poem)*

dicendo: - O Ambra mia, queste son l'acque
ove bagnar già el bel corpo ti piacque!

With words to flow: "This, Ambra, is the stream
In which you bathed your shapely form supreme!

Io non aria creduto in dolor tanto
che la propria piatà, vinta da quella
della mia ninfa, si fugissi alquanto:
per la maggior pietà d'Ambra mia bella,
questa, non già la mia, muove in me il pianto.
E pur la vita trista e meschinella,
ancor ch'etterna, quando meco penso,
è peggio in me, che in lei non aver senso.

Lasso, ne' monti miei paterni eccelsi
son tante ninfe, e sicura è ciascuna;
tra mille belle la più bella scelsi,
non so come; ed amando sol questa una,
primo segno di amore e crini svelsi,
e caccia'la della acqua fresca e bruna;
tenera e nuda poi, fuggendo esangue,
tinse le spine e' sassi el sacro sangue.

E finalmente in un sasso conversa,
per colpa sol del mio crudel disio,
non so, non sendo mia, come l'ò persa,
né posso perder questo viver mio:
in questo è troppo la mia sorte avversa,
misero essendo ed immortale dio;
ché, s'io potessi pure almen morire,
potria il giusto immortal dolor finire.

Io ho imparato come si compiacci
a donna amata ed il suo amor guadagni,
che a quella che più ami più dispiacci!
O Borea algente, che gelato stagni,
l'acque correnti fa s'induri e ghiacci,
che, petra fatto, la ninfa acompagni:
né sol giamai co' raggi chiari e gialli
risolva in acqua e rigidi cristalli.

However deep my own heartfelt regret,
Much deeper sorrow I now feel for her;
That is an anguish I have never met,
Nor knew such harrowing pity could occur.
My lovely Ambra in my heart is set,
Her fate I mourn, though mine to tears should spur:
Eternally will flow my wretched life,
To be a solid stone will end her strife.

Alas, in mountains high, whence I descend,
Live many nymphs, and each is free of care;
Fairest was she: my choice can I defend?
As a first sign of love I tore her hair,
And such was my behaviour, in the end
From my cool stream, I drove her to despair.
Defenceless, tender, naked, pale, she fled,
O'er thorns and stones her sacred blood she shed.

And when I saw her flesh a stone became,
I lost for ever what was never mine;
My cruel desire alone must take the blame,
I cannot die, such end would be benign -
Immortal god am I. Of woe my flame
Eternal burns, of deepest love a sign;
If death could only come to my release,
This great and everlasting grief would cease.

I've learnt to woo the object of desire,
To gain the heart of one I tried to please,
To give my love, and only hate acquire.
Oh icy Boreas, my running waters freeze,
Make hard as rock, so that I may aspire
To be beside my nymph and find some ease;
And may the hottest sunrays ever felt
My rigid crystals ne'er to water melt.[14]

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'He that travelleth into a country ... goeth to school': il viaggio di John North verso l'Italia e ritorno (1575-1579)

Mariagrazia Bellorini

Il saggio di Francis Bacon, *Of Travel*, da cui la citazione è parzialmente tratta - la frase per intero recita: 'He that travelleth into a country, before he has some entrance into the language, goeth to school and not to travel' - appare nel primo decennio del diciassettesimo secolo e si pone non certo a commento di un fenomeno al suo primo apparire, quale appunto il viaggio di istruzione, ma piuttosto come riflessione su esperienze da tempo ormai affrontate dai giovani aristocratici inglesi e come mediazione tra estremi polemici in denigrazione o difesa del valore formativo delle stesse, inserite in un dibattito che aveva avuto inizio anni prima ed era destinato a continuare.[1]

Per generazioni i nobili inglesi avevano compiuto viaggi all'estero, ma a partire dagli anni 70 del 1500, questa pratica si diffonde rapidamente come passaggio irrinunciabile nella formazione del gentiluomo, quale convenzione che il secolo successivo battezzerà *Grand Tour*. Il viaggio assume un valore educativo come ben sentenzia Bacon, in quanto permette al giovane aristocratico lo studio delle istituzioni politiche, sociali e culturali di altre nazioni; lo studio e il perfezionamento delle lingue parlate, indispensabili per l'affermazione nell'amministrazione pubblica e diplomatica, o comunque per il consolidamento del suo ruolo nella società, a Corte: il progetto educativo cui il viaggio partecipa, mira dunque alla formazione del gentiluomo perfetto nei modi, nel comportamento, nella conversazione, nella vita pubblica e privata. Di tutto ciò il viaggio rappresenta insieme momento costruttivo e coronamento finale, espressione di ricercatezza, di raffinatezza sociale, di disponibilità economica pari alle ambizioni del giovane viaggiatore dell'epoca.

A conferma del rapido intensificarsi del fenomeno nasce in contemporanea, a partire dagli anni settanta cioè, una reazione fortemente critica sulla sua validità, e fiorisce una copiosa letteratura didattica e satirica. Il primo nome che viene in mente è quello di Ascham, con il suo specifico attacco, nel 1570 appunto, ne *The Scholemaster*, dove gli esiti

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1 Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, ed. 1612.

del viaggio in Italia vengono condannati icasticamente nel proverbio che felicemente assumerà l'ovvietà di un assioma per generazioni a seguire: 'Inglese italianato è un diabolo incarnato.'[2] Si enfatizza il potenziale moralmente distruttivo che il giovane viaggiatore può introdurre nella società inglese e si arriva a paventare la corruzione morale, la degenerazione del comportamento sociale e politico e religioso a contatto con nazioni quali l'Italia, per tutto il tempo in cui questa verrà vista come la culla del papalismo e del macchiavellismo, e la Francia, quando la preoccupazione dei moralisti si sposterà sull'eccessiva influenza della cultura francese alla corte di Giacomo I.

Anche l'immaginazione di poeti e drammaturghi, sempre a partire dagli anni settanta del secolo, viene rapidamente sollecitata dal tipo del 'diabolo incarnato': molti di essi sfruttano il potenziale di comicità del viaggiatore che assume atteggiamenti affettati, abbigliamenti stravaganti, manierismi di ogni genere. Già nel 1578 Sir Philip Sidney può pronosticare al fratello Robert: 'ere it be long [...] wee travaylers shalbe made sport of comedies.'[3] Fino alla seconda decade del seicento si consolida e afferma il topos del viaggiatore italianato e per questo sciocco, ingenuo, malinconico, con la non trascurabile conseguenza di estendere in questo modo ad un pubblico ben più vasto di quello dove il fenomeno era nato e continuava a manifestarsi, l'interesse e la polemica sull'utilità o meno del viaggiare.

Nè satira poetica, nè saggistica o manualistica negativa arrestano comunque il flusso dei giovani della aristocrazia verso il continente, dove l'Italia rappresenta la meta conclusiva e forse più ambita, per il compiersi di una educazione che ha saldi paramentri classicisti e umanistici; e ovviamente si sviluppa parallelamente anche una saggistica apologetica di tale pratica. Si può anzi dire che i viaggiatori stessi, nel momento in cui si imporranno lo sforzo di riflessione per trascrivere e comunicare tramite quaderni, diari, appunti le loro esperienze, diventeranno i migliori anche se inconsapevoli apologisti della validità educativa del viaggio. Diventeranno 'autori' e daranno forma e consistenza a quel fenomeno che da esile, pragmatica, dapprima occasionale annotazione di viaggio

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2 Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (1570) Dr. Giles (ed.) (London. 1864-65), III, 156.

3 Philip Sidney to Robert Sidney, *The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney* A. Feuillerat (ed.) (Cambridge. 1962), III, 125, in Sara Douglass *Educational Travellers: Popular Imagery and Public Criticism in Early Modern England,* htpp:www.saradouglass.com

nelle sue forme più ripetitive di rendiconto commerciale, diventerà con il trascorrere del diciasettesimo secolo, un ricco genere letterario: il *travel book*, letteratura odeporica, insieme di scrittura diaristica, di registrazione e elaborazione di informazioni e, in breve, di esperienza maturata e offerta a lettori, a loro volta viaggiatori sia pur virtuali, sollecitati ad immaginare l'esistenza di mondi, nazioni, popoli culture diverse. La relazione di viaggio, con il tempo, presentandosi come felicissimo connubio di impressionismo descrittivo e di imprenditorialità editoriale, di sfoggio di cultura e di nazionalismo, di meravigliata esplorazione e di sagacia interpretativa, assumerà dignità letteraria facendosi presentazione dell'altro e del diverso, riduzione dello sconosciuto al noto.

Inizialmente peraltro quegli anni settanta che come accennato, vedono nascere la libellistica polemica sul viaggio, non offrono un pari sviluppo della letteratura odeporica. Giustamente Bacon nel saggio citato, che utilmente si può assumere come referente nel contesto in esame in quanto offre anche ai contemporanei un'interpretazione oggettiva e positiva del viaggio, osserva come chi va per mare, dove non c'è nulla da vedere, tenga un diario di bordo, mentre chi va per terra trascuri tale pratica nonostante ci sia tanto da vedere, pratica che va dunque incoraggiata 'let diaries therefore be brought to use.'

Tutto questo conferisce un primo motivo di interesse per un quadernetto, ora tra i manoscritti della Bodleian,[4] un rendiconto di spesa di un giovane aristocratico, John North, che proprio negli anni '70, tra il settembre 1575 e il novembre 1577, compie il suo viaggio avente come meta Venezia. Si tratta, non illudiamoci, di un lista spese che ci riserva comunque qualche sorpresa, sufficiente a mio avviso a riconoscevi non tanto la struttura embrionale del *travel book*, quanto piuttosto la conferma di come, per ricorrere ancora alle parole di Bacon, 'Travel, in the younger sort is a part of education.'

John North si propone come tipo esemplare di viaggiatore elisabettiano, nobile, membro di una famiglia segnata politicamente dal padre Roger, fedele uomo del Leicester e di Elisabetta, noto anche per la padronanza della lingua italiana dimostrata in diverse missioni diplomatiche in Francia. Il personaggio della famiglia che spicca culturalmente è peraltro Thomas, fratello di Roger e quindi zio di John, il

4 Bodleian Library, Oxford MS.Add.C.193.

più famoso dei traduttori elisabettiani, che annovera tra le prime traduzioni un'opera dall'italiano di Anton Francesco Doni.[5] La famiglia North è legata sia politicamente che, di conseguenza, culturalmente al Conte di Leicester, il che significa in ultima ma non piccola istanza, che ne condivide l'interesse particolare per la cultura italiana, favorendo la diffusione, lettura e traduzione delle migliori opere della produzione umanistica e rinascimentale. E' il contesto dove è più ricco e vivace per alcuni anni sul finir del secolo il passaggio di quegli esuli italiani per motivi religiosi, alcuni buoni letterati altri più modesti mestieranti o profittatori, che si fanno docenti di lingua, tutori, traduttori, artisti e abili collaboratori politici. Essi contemporaneamente alimentano e sfruttano il favore che l'italiano come lingua colta, alla moda, gode in quegli anni. Fra i più qualificati di questi - ricordato come ottimo insegnante, traduttore da ambedue le lingue, collaboratore dell'editore londinese John Wolfe - è certamente Jacobo Castelvetro, nipote del grande Lodovico, che viene scelto da Roger come tutore del suo primogenito John. Giunto in casa North nel 1574, il Castelvetro accompagnerà il giovane nel suo viaggio in Italia l'anno successivo. Il cammino dei due si separerà per un breve periodo: John ritorna dall'Italia nel novembre del 1577, il Castelvetro nel 1580, rimanendo peraltro legato alla famiglia North e in particolare a John che definirà 'mio padrone' ancora nel 1588.[6]

Estraneo alle tante e complesse polemiche su pregi e pericoli del viaggiare che nascono proprio negli anni in cui egli parte, John North non tradisce nelle sue scarne note alcuna preparazione particolare alla nuova esperienza. D'altra parte se anche avesse voluto - anticipando Bacon che raccomanda al viaggiatore, 'let him carry with him also some card, or book, describing the country where he travelleth' - far riferimento a testi che potessero essergli da guida o da modello, non avrebbe avuto di che scegliere, se non rifarsi, virtualmente, alla *Historie of Italie* di William Thomas pubblicata nel 1549. L'ipotesi è peraltro oziosa, avendo il giovane a disposizione un tutore quale il Castelvetro.

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5 *cfr.* M. G. Bellorini, 'Thomas North traduttore di Anton Francesco Doni,' *Aevum* (1964), I-II, 84-103.

6 Su Jacopo Castelvetro si veda: E. Rosenberg, 'Giacopo Castelvetro Italian Publisher in Elizabethan London and His Patrons,' *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, VI (1943), 119-148; K. T. Butler, 'Giacomo Castelvetro 1546-1616,' *Italian Studies*, V (1950), 1-42; bene informata la voce sul *Dizionario degli Italiani* a cura di Luigi Firpo.

Di John sappiamo che fu 'scholar and soldier,' studente del Trinity College, Cambridge; viene ricordata la sua partecipazione a varie spedizioni diplomatiche e militari nei Netherlands.[7] Per quanto ci riguarda lo possiamo solo ricordare come autore di quella piccola agenda: una novantina di paginette, delle quali, per di più, alcune in condominio con la moglie a quanto sembra, che sfrutta ad anni di distanza per le sue note di spesa le pagine non utilizzate da John.[8] Calepino che per altro John stesso ha utilizzato parsimoniosamente. Quasi a seguire le inverse direzioni del suo andare, egli registra le spese del viaggio di discesa verso l'Italia su un verso del quaderno, mentre per il resoconto del ritorno egli lo rovescia, lo utilizza nel senso inverso. Il quadernino si presenta quindi con questa configurazione: da f.2 a f.16 annotazioni dal 6 sett. al 25 nov. 1575, in inglese; dal f.24 al f.90 note di John in italiano dal 24 sett. 1577 al 23 dic. 1579, con la disposizione idiosincratica di cui si è detto per cui le note del viaggio di ritorno accupano i fogli del quadernino rovesciato, dal fondo, quindi dal f. 90 al f.74v, mentre le note dei primi due anni di rientro in Inghilterra occupano i fogli restanti nel verso originario, dal f.24 al f.74v andando così a coincidere con la fine della registrazione del viaggio di ritorno.

Viene in mente la preziosità della carta all'epoca, e si conferma anche la natura privata e occasionale degli appunti, risultanti in sostanza nella scrupolosa annotazione delle spese per e di viaggio di cui rendere conto al padre, finanziatore della spedizione, pare per una somma di circa 300 sterline.[9]

Le note hanno inizio il 6 settembre 1575, precedute da poche righe di titolazione: 'A note of my expences which I have spent for my voiage, and in the same' (f.2r.).Dal 6 al 9 settembre egli registra spese varie per il completamento dell'assetto di viaggio per sé, per i suoi uomini, (non molti tre e quattro a ricostruire dalle spese), due paper books, 3 borse di cuoio, cappello di feltro, stivali di camoscio, revisione di spada e pugnale con relative guaine, pasti per sé, i suoi uomini e il suo cavallo, Bolton,

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7 *cfr.* DNB alla voce John North. Nato intorno al 1551, fu al Peterhouse College nel 1562 e al Trinity College nel 1567, dove gli venne riconosciuto un MA nel 1572. MP per Cambridgeshire nel 1584, 1586, 1587. Le spedizioni politico-militari nei Netherlands furono negli anni 1585 e 1597, morì nelle Fiandre il 5 giugno 1597.

8 Bodleian Add.C.193, ff.16v-23v.

9 *cfr.* Butler, 5.

che in qualche modo si è azzoppato, creando preoccupazioni e spese per curarlo. Lo spostamento a Dover avviene per tappe, - Deptford, Gravesend, Rochester, Canterbury - e con un intensificarsi delle spese e l'invio a Londra di un corriere, 'Hugh my man,' per recuperare denaro da certo mr. Osborne (f. 2v).

Il 12 e 13 settembre è fermo a Dover intento a procurarsi cibo, a ferrare e curare il suo cavallo: si accumulano spese piccole e meno piccole, tariffe per il doganiere cui viene consegnato la licenza di viaggio concessa a John dal Leicester, tasse o licenze per la permanenza a Dover e per il passaggio in nave per Calais, ma anche una piccola elargizione ad una povera fanciulla che suona il liuto (f.3r). Imbarcatosi finalmente alle undici di mattina, abbandona la nuda elencazione, e si sofferma a descrivere la traversata, che per via dei venti e delle maree dura ben dodici ore rispetto alle sette di media, e che si conclude alle sette della mattina del quindici, con grande soddisfazione del nostro che annota di non aver sofferto mai di maldimare: 'I was never sicke of the sea for all our aboarde ther a day and a nighte, but as well and so healthie as if I had been of Land' (f.4r). Soddisfazione tanto più comprensibile se volessimo confrontarla con gli effetti che la stessa traversata, pur contenuta nelle sette ore di media, ebbe su altri viaggiatori, a cominciare del ben più celebre Coryate, che descriverà con toni tra il grottesco e il comico lo sconvolgimento fisico causatogli dal maldimare, di lì a pochi anni, nel 1608.[10]

Si susseguono regolarmente le tappe giornaliere: da Calais a Dunkerque e quindi a Newport, Odenburg, Bruges, Gaunt per giungere ad Anversa per una lunga sosta, dal 21 al 28 settembre. Le annotazioni rimangono scarne, pur variate dal calcolo delle miglia che separano le varie località, dal nome delle locande, dalla presenza di monete diverse ovviamente dalle inglesi: corone francesi, *caesars, rialls, patars, crusadoes*. L'itinerario scelto è quello seguito dai mercanti italiani verso e dall'Inghilterra, e adottato dagli esuli italiani in fuga come il più sicuro

10 *cfr.* M. Strachan, *The Life and Adventures of Thomas Coryate* (London. 1962), 17, dove l'autore Thomas Coryate, nel linguaggio grottesco che caratterizza la sua prosa di viaggio, annota di essere rimasto sul ponte per tutta la traversata e di aver 'varnished the exterior parts of the ship with the excrementall ebullitions of my tumultuous stomach, as desiring to satiate the gormandizing paunches of the hungry Haddocks.'

per motivi politici e religiosi.[11] Un itinerario certamente scelto e proposto dal Castelvetro, che ad Anversa ha i corrispondenti librari di suo interesse, gli stessi che John utilizzerà una volta rientrato a Londra, per rifornirsi di testi italiani: un Benedetto Spinola, nonché certo 'signor Sapcotes,' in collegamento tra Venezia, Anversa e Londra. Non libri ma manufatti e tessuti per cui Le Fiandre erano giustamente famose, interessano per il momento John, che acquista tela d'Olanda, percalle da portare a Venezia, sette fazzoletti, nove iarde di pizzi, tagli per camicie e così di seguito; alloggia nella casa degli Inglesi, presso certo 'mr Eaton Governor of the merchants' (f 5v).

Il viaggio si snoda lungo il corso del Reno: scorrono rapide sulle paginette date, località, miglia e la scarna, meticolosa registrazione delle spese quotidiane: pranzo, cena, alloggio per sé, i suoi uomini e i cavalli, acquisti di parti di vestiario (guanti, cappelli, calzature), cura delle selle e delle armi, oggetti disparati: un calamaio, un pettine, coltelli con l'impugnatura d'argento, un sigillo d'argento su cui fa incidere il suo stemma, mance o comunque pagamenti a servi, guide e postiglioni. A Aquisgrana, fatto eccezionale, paga per sè e per i suoi, per un bagno 'given to the bath were wee washed us': è il 30 settembre (f.6v)! Il bagno successivo sarà annotato in data 15 ottobre. a Strasburgo (f.9r), e ancora a Chiavenna il 27 ottobre (f.10v).

Si arriva a Colonia il primo ottobre e di qui la comitiva risale il Reno fino a Magonza in barca, o chiatta trainata da cavalli, un percorso di sei giorni durante il quale il giovane prende qualche appunto diligente, quasi scolastico: le città lungo il fiume , st. Guerr (St. Goar), Backraugh (Bacharach) sono murate, con castelli essendo 'of the religion' appartengono al Langravio, genero del Conte Palatino, tante città piccole, fortificate su ambedue le alte rive del fiume. Magonza città libera cattolica, come il suo vescovo, accoglie anche protestanti. Anche la tappa successiva, Oppenam (Oppenheim) raggiunta con una imbarcazione pubblica, viene definita per il suo essere fortificata, città imperiale, sotto

11 Solo nel secolo successivo la strada convenzionale del *Grand Tour* vedrà una rapida discesa verso Parigi e le altre città francesi ritenute mete irrinunciabili per il giovane in viaggio, Lione, Bordeaux, Orléans; seguita dalla traversata da brividi del Cenisio, o dalla sfida densa di insidie del passaggio marino da Marsiglia a Genova; tali sono le indicazioni di Richard Lassels, *Voyage of Italy* (Parigi, 1670), autore di quella che è considerata la prima guida di viaggio in Italia.

la giurisdizione del Conte Palatino. Nella locanda locale egli riconosce le insegne di suo padre, (f.8v) e di pari, anch'egli nel viaggio di ritorno ad Aquisgrana pagherà uno scudo all'oste 'per disegnar e far le mie arme' (f.78r). Di Spira annoterà le doppie mura, l'ampiezza delle strade, la raccomandabilità della locanda all'insegna della Coppa d'oro, fatta eccezione per le lenzuola 'noe cleane sheetes, as in most places else' (f.8v).

La scarsità e povertà delle note sulla situazione militare-politica e religiosa dei paesi attraversati, si possono giustificare ricordando quanto Bacon suggerirà nel suo saggio: l'abitudine a prendere appunti si svilupperà via via nel viaggiatore ben guidato, con l'esercizio nel tempo. La seconda fase del viaggio offrirà infatti commenti più ampi, variati, vivaci. Per il momento John è solo un giovane apprendista, e come tale riprende la semplice annotazione: il 13 ottobre è a Strasburgo, il 17 a Basilea dove si trattiene fino al 19. E' ritornato alla laconicità della nota spese: l'acquisto di un altro cavallo, di scarpe, calze di lana, guanti foderati di pelliccia, di una sciarpa contro il vento, la riparazione di spadini, selle, matelli, scarpe, il fuoco in camera: dobbiamo dedurre che il suo equipaggiamento invernale fosse insufficiente, ma egli direttamente non commenta.

A Mouse paga un italiano, ma non sappiamo per quale motivo, forse è la stessa persona che verrà liquidata a Chiavenna 'an Italian which was our guide from Basill' (f.10v); a Speluca, (passo Spluga) il 25 ottobre affitta un cavallo per scalare le montagne per non affaticare il suo Bolton, di Lisula nota la cattiva accoglienza e la povertà che riduce gli abitanti a mangiar castagne invece del pane; niente da dire su Chiavenna dove arriva il 26; quanto a Lecco, il 28 ottobre, annota soltanto le spese per l'attraversamento notturno del lago 'I payed for my feriage by water, a lake 40 miles over heare wee did rowe all night 26 rialls.' (f. 10v)

Rapidamente passano sulla pagina altri toponimi italiani: Bergamo, Palazzolo, Brescia: in questa città si occupa di nuovo di cavalli, vendendo quello acquistato a Basilea e noleggiandone due: uno per il fedele Hughes e l'altro per Sr Jacomo, prima ed unica volta in cui viene esplicitamente menzionato il suo tutore.

Avrebbe potuto dire di più: il Castelvetro ricorderà, in forma di aneddoto, a più di trenta anni di distanza (1613), i commenti positivi di John sulla generosità dei vendemmiatori della zona intorno a Brescia, nell'offrire ai viaggiatori assaggi della loro uva: 'e se il signor barone

Giovanni North fosse oggi vivo, ciò che dico confesserebbe, come quelli a cui nel Bresciano una tal cosa avvenne l'anno di Cristo 1575, il quale andava sotto la cura mia a veder la vaga Italia, del qual modo di fare restò egli anzi che non stupefatto e tale amorevole uso lodò molto.'[12] Il lettore può rammaricarsi dunque, nel confronto fra i due, della laconicità del discepolo che nulla lascia trapelare delle sue vivaci reazioni. A parziale compensazione, se continuiamo il viaggio nel testo, troviamo una animazione e loquacità insolita nel momento in cui John giunge a Mantova. Curiosamente i giorni di permanenza in questa città, ultima tappa prima di Venezia, occupano un numero di paginette consistenti, un terzo di quelle dedicate a questa prima parte del viaggio: cinque pagine, pari a dieci facciate su un totale di sedici pagine per trentadue facciate.

Se per i primi tre giorni di soggiorno si limita a registrare le solite spese, ivi compresa la dogana di ingresso in città, il pagamento dell'ingresso a 'The Duke his buildings and his pallace' sembra generare una apertura descrittiva e commentativa in un diarista finora così povero o avaro di riflessioni e valutazioni. Si mescolano in queste righe l'ammirazione per le architetture e gli ornamenti delle due residenze ducali e la meraviglia per la presenza di tanti ebrei in città, rispettati e trattati con assoluta parità. Dovremo aspettare le encomiastiche pagine di Thomas Coryate per ritrovare tanta ammirazione per Mantova.[13]

Si delinea nelle note di John l'enorme palazzo del Duca, diviso in due parti, vecchia e nuova, dal mantenimento molto costoso 'for the somptuous furniture and the fayre rooffes of his chambers all guilt with good and fine gould, besid havinge the images of the romane emperoures, largly carved and sett fast with curious worke in marble and other stone lykewise guilt with purest gould' (f.11v). Poco oltre (f.12v) fa riferimento all'altro palazzo ducale, fuori città, vicino al lago e fra i campi, 'verie fayre and princlie, which hath large roomes and great chambers, amongst which there is one above all the rest havinge ane especiall qualytie [...],'

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12 I vendemmiatori italiani, contrariamente a quelli di altre zone di Europa, si offenderebbero se non venisse loro richiesto assaggio della loro uva e se si chiede loro dell'acqua rispondono: 'l'acqua, signor mio, fa marcire i pali delle siepi; del vino io vi darò volentieri,' Jacopo Castelvetro, *Breve racconto di tutte le radici, di tutte l'erbe, e di tutti I frutti che crudi o cotti in Italia si mangiano* (1614), Luigi Firpo (ed.) (Torino, 1974).

13 Strachan, 36.

e registra il fenomeno acustico di trasmissione da un estremo all'altro della sala di parole appena sussurrate in opposti angoli.

Altro elemento che conquista la sua attenzione è il lago. 'Ther runneth thouroughe the cytie a large and fayre lake [...]' (f.12r.), grande difesa naturale della città, rafforzato dal lato della strada che proviene da Brescia da una fortezza, mentre lungo la sponde verso la città sono in costruzione altri contrafforti e difese. Lago ricco di fauna, pesci e uccelli acquatici che d'inverno arriverebbero - non sappiamo data la stagione se egli stia riportando una sua esperienza o una voce popolare - a ricoprire la superficie del lago al punto da non lasciar intravvedere l'acqua stessa.

L'argomento di maggior sorpresa per lui è comunque costituito dagli ebrei: con stupore riflette sulla libertà e autonomia di movimento e di commercio, sui privilegi loro concessi da un Duca, che apprezza, e sfrutta, il grande contributo dato alle sue casse dalla tassazione sul loro consistente volume di affari.[14] Osserva ancora come questo stimoli ogni ebreo a cimentarsi in qualsiasi tipo di commercio, dai piccoli guadagni su oggetti vecchi, su abiti usati e riattati, fino a sviluppare commerci sempre più redditizi e importanti. Non c'è un ebreo che mendichi in tutta Mantova, anzi sembrano tutti molto ricchi, quasi a confermare la sua sottesa appovazione per le occulate scelte politiche del Duca.

La meta ultima del viaggio, Venezia, sembra ora a poche ore o miglia di distanza. Lo spostamento a Lignana prelude, con il passaggio da Padova, alla conclusione, senonché una serie imprevedibile di contrattempi sembra renderla improvvisamente irraggiungibile. Percorse tre miglia in direzione di Padova i nostri vengono richiamati dagli ufficiali di frontiera e costretti a ritornare alla pessima locanda di Bosco in quanto Padova, essendosi diffuso il sospetto di casi di peste a Mantova, ha imposto il blocco per chiunque provenga da quella città. Trattenuto per due giorni,

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14 Il duca Guglielmo Gonzaga (1558-1587), portò Mantova a gran floridezza economica e artistica, intensificando anche i rapporti internazionali. La sua amministrazione energica e ordinata diede grande impulso all'economia, la colonia israelita numerosa versava volentieri notevoli tributi come prezzo della ducale tolleranza. Gli ebrei molto numerosi ebbero per lungo tempo condizioni di speciale favore e insolità libertà di esercitare commerci: previlegi che essi pagavano con tributi e prestiti ingenti. Dal 17 marzo 1610 ebbero l'ordine di abitare dentro il ghetto e a questo furono apposti portoni con chiavistelli esterni. Romolo Quazza, voce Mantova *Enciclopedia Treccani*, (1934), Vol. 22.

crede di aver trovato modo di superare l'ostacolo ritornando a Lignana per ottenere dal governatore del luogo il permesso di procedere verso Venezia per via d'acqua.

La situazione di disagio e disappunto, porta eccezionalmente John ad una rielaborazione enfatica degli eventi, sul come in tutto questo 'was all good fortune agaynst mee' (f.14v), e di seguito con bell' esercizio retorico organizza in tre fasi distinte gli attacchi di 'ill fortune' contro di lui: primo, inducendolo a trattenersi a Mantova un giorno e mezzo per vedere la città e, il palazzo del duca e per completare il suo equipaggiamento, quando, se si fosse mosso con una giornata di anticipo, avrebbe raggiunto Padova prima della chiusura della frontiera: 'this I ascribe unto our first ill fortune' (f.15r). Continua l'elenco: 'the 2. time, frowninge more upon us, after wee tooke a repulse of a simple watchman and were compeld to revers our former steppes, shee turned us agayne into our ould storie,' cioè ricacciandoli per due giorni in un luogo solitario, da eremita, senza aiuto e speranza di potersi allontanare, preoccupati non per la peste, ma più per l'esosità dell'alloggio 'which wee prevented by good dyet,' il commento assume sfumature di comicità e di ironia involontaria, toni che si rafforzano nel presentare il terzo definitivo attacco di 'ill fortune,' indirizzato specificamente contro di lui, John. Nella speranza di poter evadere i blocchi stradali procedendo per via d'acqua, dopo aver ottenuto il lasciapassare a Lignana viene affittata una imbarcazione per sette corone cui egli, sulle pressanti insistenze del barcaiolo, aggiunge 'a crusadoe in gould, because I had no lesser some to give him;' ma appena sborsata la somma, ritorna il messo da Padova per annunciare l'apertura del blocco. La piccola compagnia riprende quindi la strada verso Lignana, rimettendoci ovviamente la somma ormai data al barcaiolo, e qui John ribadisce con gran cruccio la sua perdita supplementare dello scudo d'oro. Là giunti, incappano, a sei miglia dalla città, nel blocco non ancora rimosso, dal quale i doganieri li lasceranno procedere solo dopo aver ricevuto l'autorizzazione ufficiale scritta dal governatore di Montagnana. Costretti a rimanere fermi per otto ore, dalle due del pomeriggio fino alle dieci di sera, si trovano in un luogo inospitale al punto che nessuno vende loro cibo, anzi chiudono loro gli usci in faccia, 'as if wee had bene hated menn of the Worlde' (f.15v). In conclusione 'this altogether with heapes of ill happ we abidd the brunts of fortune.'

A questo punto la mala sorte o sfortuna sembra, per analogia, trasferirsi sul lettore: infatti le annotazioni di spese riprendono e segnalano

la presenza di John a Este a Padova ma, nel momento in cui la nostra curiosità punta all'incontro con Venezia e alle possibili reazioni di John, si interrompono bruscamente e non verranno riprese se non a distanza di tempo, in situazione come vedremo, letteralmente, metaforicamente e redazionalmente capovolta, rovesciata.

Anche il lettore ha fatto un suo viaggio nel testo, avventurandosi attraverso una calligrafia piena di insidie e enigmi di un autore che ha conservato quella che tecnicamente è descritta come 'secretary hand,' sorta di calligrafia gotica, 'curly' di non facile decifrazione quindi (cf. ill.1). Un viaggio che sembra finire nel nulla, che poco ci ha detto sul giovane viaggiatore, fatta eccezione forse per lo sfogo ultimo, che peraltro poteva farci sperare in qualche succosa paginetta sulla città meta di tanti viaggi, di tante storie, di tanta ammirazione. Forse la storia di John a Venezia fu redatta su altro quadernetto, perso o disperso in una delle tante biblioteche del mondo. Oppure, altra ipotesi, egli è troppo impegnato frastornato dalla nuova vita e dall'impegno con cui la affronta, ivi compreso l'apprendimento della lingua, per attenersi alla quotidiana e monotona registrazione rispettata durante il viaggio.

Torniamo a Bacon e alla citazione con cui si è aperto il mio intervento: il viaggiatore che raggiunga un paese di cui non conosce la lingua, 'goeth to school': di questo il calepino ci dà l'unica certezza: ciò cui si è dedicato il giovane durante la sua permanenza a Venezia, oltre speriamo a tante altre cose di cui non sappiamo, è certamente l'apprendimento dell'italiano parlato ma anche scritto e altrettanto certamente sotto la guida del tutore Jacobo Castelvetro.

Dobbiamo solo capovolgere il quadernetto di cui ci stiamo occupando per costatare materialmente la trasformazione avvenuta tra il novembre 1575 e il settembre 1577, date entro le quali si circoscrive la permanenza in Italia del giovane North: il 22 settembre del '77 egli infatti riprende la via del ritorno, riprende il suo quadernetto di appunti, lo rovescia e inizia un nuovo diario in italiano e in una luminosa, distesa direi solare calligrafia, tecnicamente definita 'Roman.' Il viaggio del lettore nel testo si farà d'ora in poi molto più agile e gratificante, sostenuto dalla considerazione che la decisione di scrivere in un'altra lingua e con una calligrafia nuova è oggettivamente riprova della assimilazione di una nuova cultura, di un mondo nuovo e 'moderno,' che ha affiancato i paramentri di una educazione convenzionale, legata alle tradizioni che vanno esaurendosi, fin nella calligrafia attraverso cui si segnala. Il

mutamento di lingua e di calligrafia di redazione si conferma come decisamente significante, quando scopriremo che la scelta non rimane circoscritta al periodo del viaggio di ritorno, ma persisterà portando John a continuare il suo diario sempre sulla falsariga della nota spese, in italiano e nella nuova calligrafia ancora per due anni, fino al dicembre 1579, in quella che possiamo definire la terza fase di stesura e per noi di viaggio nel testo.

Lo stile stesso della redazione cambia, se pensiamo ad un rapido confronto fra le stesse tappe di un viaggio che si compie, tranne il tratto inizale in Italia, sullo stesso percorso della discesa. Ben più numerose sono le annotazioni di commento alle diverse città attraversate, anzi di quasi tutte egli registra almento un tratto significativo, quindi un testo che pur nei suoi limiti si fa più vivace, articolato. Così a Castelfranco annoterà l'appartenenza della zona all'Arciduca Ferdinando d'Austria, e le straordinaria difese approntate dallo stesso (f.88r). Trento è 'una città non troppo grande mezza del Cardinale e mezza del Arciduca, questi due son in lotta' (f.88r), mentre 'Bolzan è terra bella tra le montagne, vi si fa arme buonissime' (f.87v).

A Insbruch (30 settembre, lunedì) fa diverse annotazioni, in parte informative sulle vicende private, familiari dell'arciduca Ferdinando, che qui tiene la sua corte: John vede passare in carrozza la Duchessa, che l'arciduca ama come moglie, anche se ufficialmente il matrimonio non è stato possibile per l'opposizione del defunto imperatore e di tutta la corte. Ciò non ha impedito la nascita di diversi figliuoli, dei quali uno è cardinale a Roma. A tutto questo aggiunge la descrizione della chiesa dei frati dove si può ammirare la 'sepoltura dello Arciduca morto, fatta tutta di marmo bianco e negro, scolpito con grand'arte, un monumento bellissimo, e oltra di questo vi sono dentro nel corpo della chiesa venti otto imagini in bronzo, cose rare e degne di essere notate, delle quali 20 sono delli imperatori d'Alamagna e di altri morti re e le altre otto di Regine bellissime queste cose sono stupende' (f.86v). Questo è un primo esempio di quanto bene egli possa ormai usare la lingua italiana, e di come si siano ampliati e articolati i suoi interessi. Ripetute informazioni e descrizioni del Ducato di Baviera si susseguono (ff.86-85v), mentre Augusta è la più bella città 'di tutta Alemagna [...] havendosi pu'assai belle donne similmente fontagne molte'(f.83r), e acquista due libri, uno dei quali è 'Cornel Agrippa' (f.84v).

Con l'uso della nuova lingua, i toponimi gli creano qualche problema di traduzione: Di Magontia si premurerà di precisare tra

parentesi 'in tudescho mens' (f.82); di Trier preciserà 'volgarmente in latino Trevir' (f.81); Bononia ci precisa 'volgarmente chiamata Bon' (f.79v); fino al culmine di questa sua identità italiana, quando di una osteria scriverà 'albergava all'osteria del Cigno, volgarmente swan' (f.76v) e volgarmente la locanda di Odenburg si chiama 'Horscombe' (f.76), non cimentandosi egli questa volta nella traduzione; ci saranno comunque anche La Chiave, La Spada, e la valutazione sarà per esse alternativamente 'honorata' o 'disgratiata!'

Di Magonza comunque dirà: 'bella assai e grande, è una città del vescovo di magontia, che s'è potentissimo e ricchissimo e è un delli Elettori. Egli ha un bel palazzo appresso Le muraglie della città e ha molte belle terre sul Reno' (f.81v). Di queste prenderà puntigliosa annotazione scendendo in barca il fiume da Magonza a Colonia, con percorso inverso ovviamente al viaggio precedente.

Il confronto fra i due resoconti, in inglese e poi in italiano, comprova il raggiungimento di una maggior articolazione, la capacità e l'abitudine acquisita all'appunto essenziale, mirato ad interessi politici, o comunque informativi sulle strutture di potere del paese attraversato. Tra tante cose egli ha dunque imparato a annotare, a prendere appunti significativi, sia pur sempre essenziali. Nel viaggio precedente di risalita del Reno Aquisgana, Colonia, erano passate senza commento alcuno; al massimo egli monotonamente aveva elencato la presenza di mura e fortificazioni ma anche questo solo per alcune delle città attraversate.

Ora il viaggio si fa di nuovo avventura ricca di incognite: così John registra l'arrivo a Colonia (giovedi 17 ottobre): 'Colonia 4 leghe da Bon d'onde non potevamo arrivare a Colonia quella sera per esser le porte serrate. Però stavamo in una villa piccola discosta quasi meza lega da Colonia, dove non fu niente da mangiare, né manco camere d'alloggiare pur ci firmavamo qua tutta la notte dormendo nelli vestimenti per non haver camere e tanto anche per sospetto della peste' (f.79v). Arrivati di buonora in città alloggiano in un'ottima locanda, il *Falcon Bianco*, dove egli cerca di riposare qualche ora, 'ma pur la disgratia ci era grande d'andar là in tanto che il patron moriva della peste in casa questa presente notte di venerdi.' Si viene così a sapere come a Colonia muoiano per il morbo dalle venti alle trenta persone al dì (nella stagione più calda ne morivano cento e più). La bontà divina solo fa loro incontrare persona che li ospita privatamente - 'Dio ne conservò per la sua divina bontà da

questa disgratia del morbo' - e l'ospite loro, 'essendo provisto de Dio' insiste per il loro pernottamento presso di lui. (ff. 79-78v).[15]

Sorprese e avventure più appetibili, ci sembra poter dedurre, gli riserva Aquisgrana, la tappa successiva, dove si trattiene due giorni ('cioè li 21 e li 22'), e dove individua, 'un luogo detto Burcet un monasterio di vergini, che sono molto belle, e buone compagne. I nomi sono Maria, Beatrix, e Agnes [...] sorelle et [...] Caterina Gulpen e una altra vergine bellissima' (ff.78v-78); altro non dice, forse ha esorcizzato in questa buona compagnia lo spettro della morte da cui è stato sfiorato a Colonia.

Il suo arrivo ad Anversa genera una bella pagina di esercizio linguistico: il 25 ottobre coincide con un evento storico che egli registra puntualmente: 'Questo venerdi la sera la principessa d'Orange[16] intrava la città guidata con molti bravi soldati, e ricevuta con gran'allegrezza e salve d'Artiglieria, dove similmente era il Prencipe e molto accarezzato dal popolo.' Durante la sua permanenza in Italia la storia ha lasciato il suo segno sulla città: 'Qua il palazzo della città è abbrusciato, con infinite altre case, le quali al mio andare in Italia erano in piede, la qual rouina gli spagnuoli fecero all'ultimo sacco dell'Anno 1576 nel mese di Novembrio. Hora la città si fortifica piu e piu ogni di, e li soldati sono i cittadini istessi e li Borghesi. Piantano assai Artiglieria su le muraglie' (f. 77v).[17] Una paginetta ben elaborata linguisticamente e funzionale nel suo valore informativo, valore che viene a completarsi con l'attenzione che il principe d'Orange gli riserva: 'Dominica 3 (novembre) Questa dominica basciava la mano al Prencipe d'Orange, il quale mi fece accoglienze gratissime' (f.76v). Non poteva essere diversamente: John è inglese, nobile, suddito

15 Questo senso di religiosa provvidenzialità riaffiora in conclusione del viaggio quando lo sbarco a Dover sembra compromesso dal pericolo di insabbiamento della nave: 'la nave correva contro il sabbione, urtandosi 6 o 7 volte con li sassi, ma al fine ne uscimmo con l'aiuto di Dio che sempre sia lodato' (f.75r).

16 Anna von Buren, sposata da Guglielmo nel 1551, erede dei possedimenti in Olanda della potente famiglia Egmont.

17 Il riferimento storico è alla 'Spanish Fury,' il sacco cui fu sottoposta la città tra ottobre e novembre 1576, dai soldati spagnoli, ammutinatisi dopo la morte del governatore spagnolo don Luis de Requesens. Complesse vicende portarono Guglielmo di Orange a capo del partito protestante, che riconquistò temporaneamente le città dei Netherlands occupate o saccheggiate dalle forze cattoliche di Filippo II. Un riferimento che conferma John come autore di tutte le parti del diario, sia in inglese che in italiano.

di Elisabetta, la regina che attentamente segue le vicende del partito di Orange, sostenendone le operazioni militari e diplomatiche,[18] sia pure con la ambiguità che le è solita. Fa parte di questo giuoco politico la visita che il principe palatino Giovanni Casimiro farà alla corte inglese, visita che puntualmente il nostro John registrerà nella terza parte del suo diario, nel gennaio 1579, elencando con la solita diligenza i nomi dei nobili, i luoghi in cui si svolsero i ricevimenti in onore dell'ospite (f.53r-54r). John stesso come si è accennato aveva particolari interessi nella frequentazione dei protagonisti delle complesse vicende politiche dei Netherlands cui avrebbe partecipato in seguito nel ruolo di fedele suddito della regina nell'area di azione del Leicester.

Egli compie il viaggio si ritorno non con il Castelvetro come si è detto, ma in compagnia di due mercanti veneziani, Ottaviano e Filippo Buon, mentre rimangono suoi referenti a Venezia il signor Pasqual Spinola e il sr. Gieron Sapcote, cui comunica i debiti in cui incorre durante il viaggio (f.84v) e con i quali manterrà contatti epistolari in seguito anche da Londra (f.88v; f.62r). Gli è accanto a partire da Amberg (f, 85v) anche un certo sr. Michele, in funzione di segretario o comunque anticipatore di pagamenti che vengono poi via via regolarmente rimborsati per le parti di competenza del giovane. Ad Anversa lo stesso compito viene assunto da certo sr. Nicolò Calinzoni (f.76v). Forse per la compagnia con cui viaggia ma soprattutto per la padronanza della lingua, durante il breve spostamento tra Dunkerque, dove è rimasto inutilmente una settimana in attesa di venti favorevoli alla traversata per Dover, e Calais, viene addirittura scambiato per un italiano: 'mi reputarono gli soldati per Italiano, parlandone un poco,' anche se la cosa non sembra gratificarlo particolarmente 'e però volendo farmi dispiacere, ma pur scampava al fine e mi conobbero per Inglese,' commenta ancora con un rigurgito di spirito nazionalistico e con un senso di sollievo (f.75v).

Al lettore rimane comunque il dato di conferma sulla utilità del viaggio che si sta concludendo. La conferma si fa indiscutibile se come lettori continuiamo il nostro viaggio nel testo: rapidamente le annotazioni

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18 Le vicende religiose e politiche dei Netherlands offrono a Elisabetta l'occasione, una delle tante, per colpire indirettamente Filippo di Spagna, indebolendone la già precaria presenza in quelle terre che, contese fra cattolici e calvinisti, miravano soprattutto a riscattare la propia autonomia e identità nazionale.

si susseguono, sempre più concentrate sulle sole spese di poste e cavalli per il tratto da Dover a Londra, dove il viaggio si conclude 'Questa notte del 17 (Novembre) giunsi a Londra' (f.74v). Quest'ultima riga a metà pagina, viene come a scontrarsi con uno scritto in collocazione inversa (cf. ill.2). Eccoci di nuovo costretti ad invertire la direzione della nostra lettura, rigirando il calepino in senso opposto: in questo modo troviamo l'inizio di questa terza parte del testo autografo del North a f. 24, dove sta la nuova intestazione in stretta continuità con la redazione appena conclusa. Il diario cioè riprende in data 24 novembre, e ciò che è sorprendente, come si diceva, è che John continui a scrivere in italiano, e che per ben due anni egli registri nella stessa lingua, sia pur sempre attraverso la falsariga della nota spese, anche vicende familiari o eventi pubblici che lo coinvolgono. La registrazione si interrompe poi banalmente per quel coincidere spaziale dei due testi come si è visto. Forse continuò altrove, forse fu sospesa in quanto come esercizio linguistico sostituita dal ritorno di Jacobo Castelvetro presso di lui.

Dall'analisi di questa terza parte di diario sembra che John anche nella vita privata si presenti come il giovane gentiluomo alla moda e quindi 'italianato,' non per questo corrotto o macchiavellico o sedizioso, come avrebbe voluto certa trattatistica contemporanea. Possiamo certo spiare tra le righe i segni di questa sua 'italianità'; tante sono le voci della nota spese, più o meno frivole, mondane, curiose, utili a ricostruire nei dettagli la giornata tipo di un giovin signore elisabettiano: tali voci sciorinano velluti, sete, pizzi, bottoni, guanti, fazzoletti di seta da Venetia, scarpette, profumi; propongono vivande, dolciumi, frutta rare; registrano richieste di prestiti e elargizioni ai parenti, tradiscono una vita notturna piuttosto intensa, la musica, la scherma, i commedianti, Londra o le residenze di Kirtling - quella della famiglia North - o quella di Kenilworth del Leicester, le visite ufficiali della regina e le feste e le celebrazioni della corte. Ma verifichiamo anche, ciò che più interessa il progetto educativo, la relativa regolarità con cui vengono registrati sul calepino anche acquisti di libri: il 24 gennaio 1578 sarà un libro italiano (f.27r); nel settembre, nel novembre dello stesso anno (f.40v, f.46v) e nel dicembre 1579 paga per altri libri, paga gli 'stampatori' (f.52v), i rilegatori (f.32) e paga a certo 'mr. Coldoke nel cimitero di S. Paolo' vecchi debiti per libri comprati da quattro anni (f.50v, f.62). In altri casi l'annotazione si fa più precisa per la connessione con il viaggio intrappreso: in data 26 febbraio 1578 John annota: 'Hoggi ebbi la cassa di miei libri da Venetia' (f.29v);

più avanti il 14 luglio 1579 scrive: 'ancora riceveva la cassa di libri del signor Sapcotes da Venetia che venne in nome dello Spinola, da Anversa' (f. 64v). Personaggi questi che egli ha più volte citato nelle sezioni precedenti del diario in italiano, sia nel partire da Venezia, che durante il viaggio e poi in Inghilterra, legati da un complesso intreccio di crediti e garanzie per le spese e i prestiti del giovane. Abbiamo con questo una conferma degli interessi culturali di John, per soddisfare i quali i librai di Londra non sono evidentemente sufficienti, tanto che egli ricorre all'importazione diretta di libri, come fa per altre merci pregiate.

Rimane insoddisfatta la curiosità sulla identità di tali testi; possiamo solo auspicare che il Castelvetro, rimasto in Italia, abbia avuto la sua parte nella scelta. In un solo caso ci viene fornita una indicazione tanto scarna quanto significativa: il 14 settembre 1578, tra le voci più disparate degli acquisti spicca questa: 'in florio e un altro libro ij sh. viij p.' (f.41r). Doveva trattarsi del primo manuale per l'insegnamento della lingua italiana, i famosi *First Fruites* di John Florio, pubblicato a Londra proprio nel 1578. Una novità che il diligente allievo di Castelvetro non può ignorare, tanto più che il Castelvetro stesso userà i manuali del Florio e di Holyband per i suoi allievi. Sappiamo d'altra parte quanto il Castelvetro si prodigasse per diffondere il meglio della letteratura italiana contemporanea associandosi allo stampatore John Wolfe e facendosi promotore di opere stampate a Londra direttamente in lingua italiana.[19]

Grazie dunque anche alla presenza del Castelvetro John North, fedele suddito e buon cortigiano, contraddice la prevedibilità del suo quotidiano esistere con quella sua scelta originale e raffinata: lo scrivere il suo diario/nota-spese in italiano facendo ricorso alla lingua colta per eccellenza e dimostrando di possederne una buona varietà lessicale e buone strutture di base. Ma è quella scelta che dà senso al suo viaggio e ne riscatta la valenza positiva a fronte di critici scettici e denigratori, anticipando la funzione che viaggiatori autori ben più abili di lui, svolgeranno in difesa di una esperienza della quale vorrano dare comunicazione comunque e nelle modalità più varie, per proporre il nuovo e il diverso.

L' indagine non può che rimanere frammentaria sul personaggio, sul suo viaggio in Italia e ritorno, su uno scritto che tortuosamente si

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19 *cfr.* M. G. Bellorini, 'Le pubblicazioni italiane dell'editore londinese John Wolfe,' *Miscellanea,* I (Udine. Università di Trieste, 1971), 17-65.

articola tra inglese e italiano, tra un verso di lettura e il suo contrario, tra l'essere una nota spese che si fa embrione di diario di viaggio: la meraviglia davanti a Mantova, il cruccio dei tanti posti di blocco, le vicende sentimentali del granduca, la peste a Colonia, le belle vergini di Magonza, l'incontro con Guglielmo d'Orange, il principe Casimiro, il Castelvetro: frammenti di una esistenza di cui altro non ci viene detto, chiusa fra le casuali tracce in ordine in qualche modo casuale su poche paginette sgualcite manoscritte. Eppure l'esperienza del giovane nobile elisabettiano, e la nostra come suoi lettori, può essere positivamente confrontata di nuovo con la conclusione del saggio di Bacon che ben codifica i gusti e gli interessi di una cultura dinamica, in continuo aggiornamento anche nei suoi più modesti rappresentanti, sempre comunque all'interno di una specifica classe sociale, intorno alla Corte.

Benchè Bacon registri un fenomeno la cui nascita, come genere letterario, è segnalata in anni posteriori a quelli cui abbiamo fatto riferimento, possiamo vedere i suoi consigli al riguardo anticipati nell'esile filigrana della nota spese di John. Durante il viaggio il giovane ha maturato l'apprendimento della lingua e l'interesse per la cultura del paese visitato, ha acquisito la capacità di eleborare riflessioni e commenti. Al ritorno in Inghilterra egli non dimentica l'esperienza affrontata, ne coltiva gli esiti, mantiene le relazioni con le conoscenze fatte. Il viaggio, relativamente alle sue esigenze e alle sue capacità, è stato per lui un percorso di istruzione come traspare nella sorprendente scelta di uso della nuova lingua scritta anche a livello privato, domestico, una scelta ben più incisiva e impegnativa che gesti o parole superficiali, che affettazioni o stravaganze; l'esperienza fatta non lo ha indotto a mutare gli atteggiamenti, 'manners' nativi, tanto meno a sostituire la sua identità nazionale con quella straniera. Vi è stato per lui un arricchimento in equilibrio fra tradizione ed innovazione, come Bacon raccomanda al viaggiatore ideale in conclusione del suo saggio: 'and let it appear that he doeth not change his country manners for those of foreign parts; but only prick in some flowers of that he has learned abroad into the customs of his own country.'

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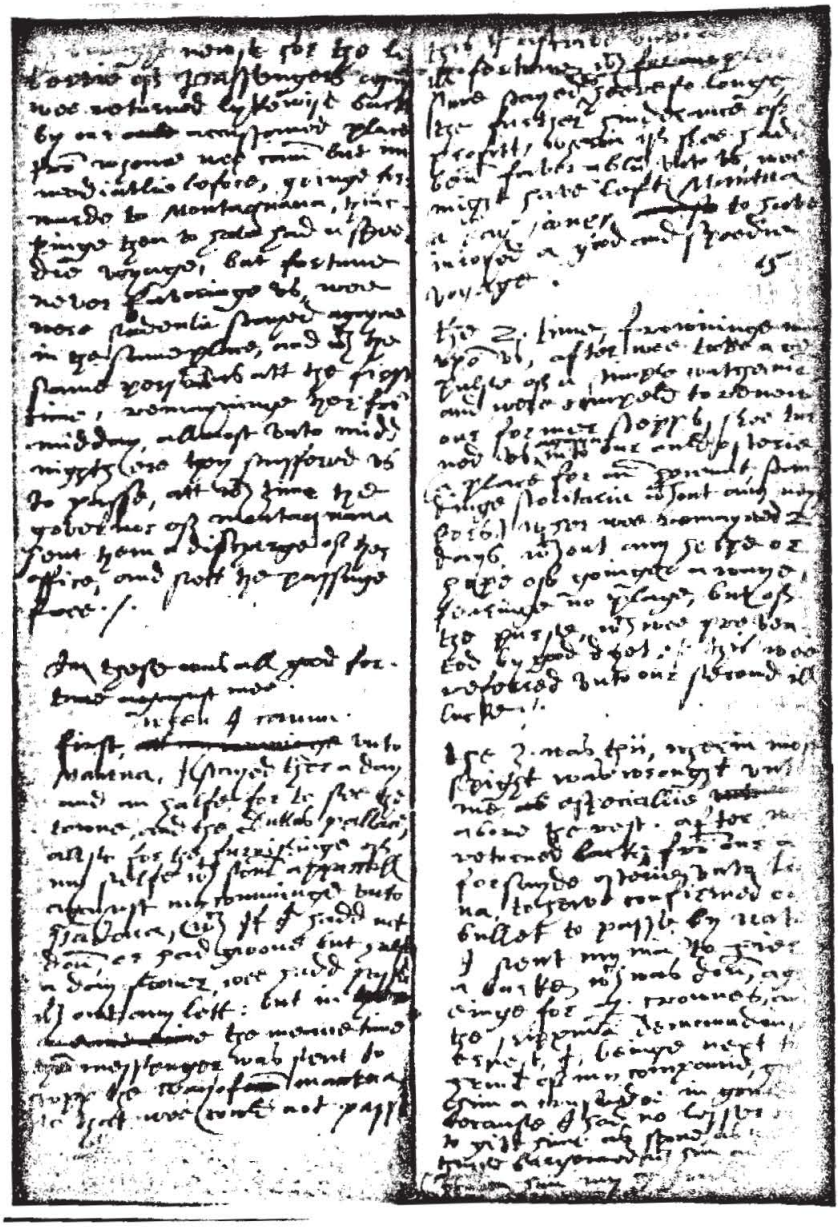
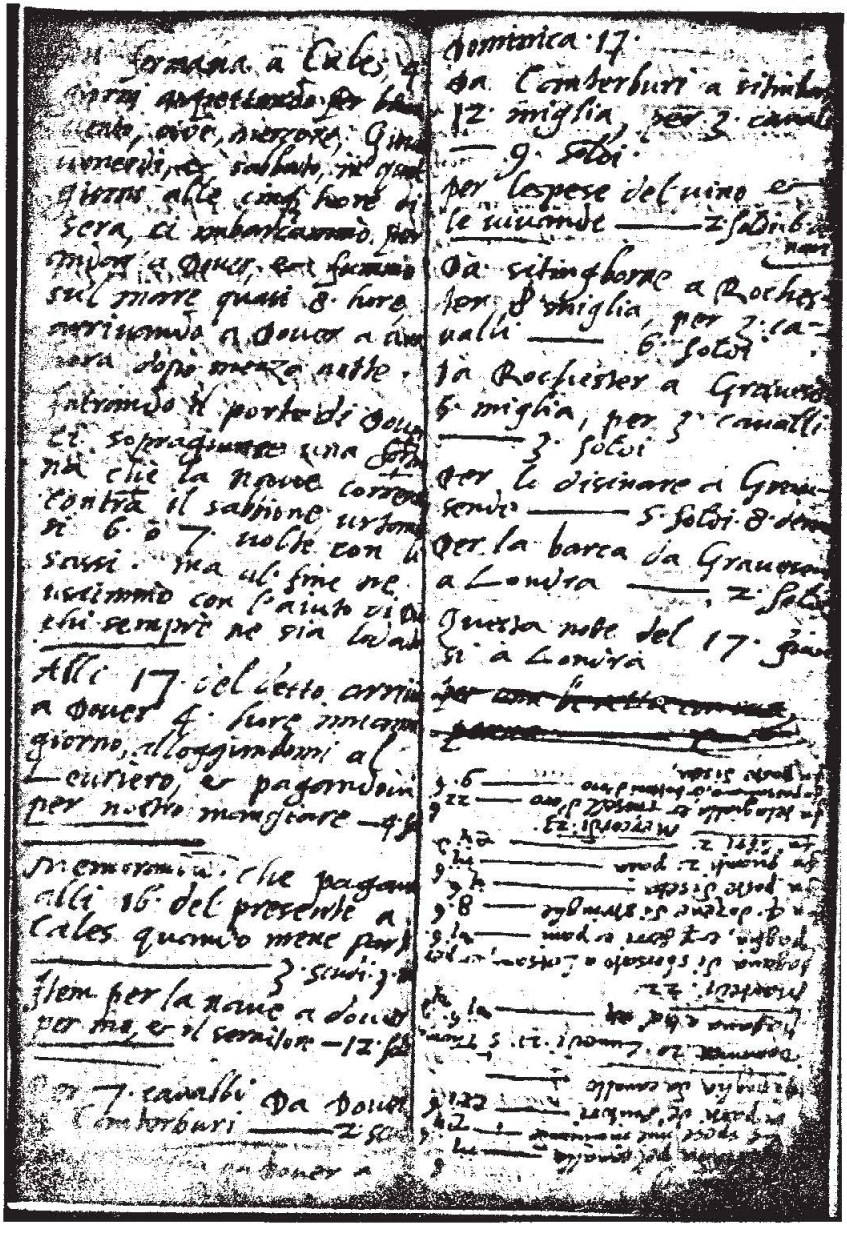


ill. 1: Bod. Add. C. 193, ff.14v-15.



ill. 2: Bod. Add. C. 193, ff.44v-45.

Jonson, Shakespeare and the Italian Theorists

David Farley-Hills

Ben Jonson's poem introducing the 1623 Folio of Shakespeare's plays is one of the finest tributes ever penned to the friend and colleague he calls 'my beloved [...] Mr. William Shakespeare.' But during Shakespeare's lifetime Jonson was on occasions much less complimentary, criticizing the plays from the standpoint of neo-classical critical theory and in particular from the standpoint of such Italian theorists as Minturno, Giraldi Cinthio and Ludovico Castelvetro. Jonson's reference to the laws of time, place and 'persons' in the prologue to *Volpone* (1606), for instance, is a reference, either directly or indirectly, to Castelvetro's *Commento sopra Aristotele* (1570), for it was Castelvetro who added the demand for a unity of place to Aristotle's reference to keeping 'where possible to within a single circle of the sun.' Castelvetro turns Aristotle's permissive reference to a unity of time to firm rules governing time and place:

> Nella tragedia lo spatio del luogo, per lo quale essa si mena a fine, è ristretto non solamente ad una città o villa o compagna o simile sito, ma anchora a quella vista che sola può apparere agli occhi di una persona.[1]

Jonson, in company with most Jacobeans, does not reveal his sources systematically, but it seems likely that he knew Castelvetro at first hand, and although his use of time and place in *Volpone* is not quite as strict as Castelvetro demands, it gets fairly close, given that Jonson always reserves the right to make those compromises required by Jacobean stage conditions and the limited tolerance of his audiences. It is interesting that the other 'rule' he mentions is not of action (which is genuinely Aristotelian, and is clearly ignored in the Politick-Wouldbe subplot of *Volpone*) but 'of persons.' This rule he also invokes in the address 'To the Readers' of *Sejanus* (1603) where he claims to have observed 'the dignity of persons' proper to tragedy. I have argued elsewhere that the passage in the address that contains this claim derives (again probably directly) from the *Discorso sulle comedie e sulle tragedie* of Giraldi Cinthio.[2]

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1 L. Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele* (1570), facsimile edition, (Munich, 1967), 296v.

2 D. Farley-Hills, 'Jonson and the Neo-classical Rules in *Sejanus* and *Volpone*,' *RES* New Series, XLVI (1995), 153-173.

It is Jonson's criticisms of Shakespeare from this neoclassical standpoint around this time that I want to address in this paper. The first of these attacks comes in the Blackfriars' comedy *Eastward Ho,* which Jonson wrote in collaboration with his Italianist colleagues Chapman and Marston (whose mother, Maria Guarsi, incidentally, was of Italian origin). The target of the attack in this play is, among other things, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which is alluded to a number of times throughout the play. The greatest concentration of these allusions comes in Act III, scene ii, which introduces us to a footman called Hamlet, who serves a mistress, the comic heroine of the play, called Gertrude. Hamlet the footman is presented as an ineffectual young man, who spends most of the scene calling for a coach that never comes and whom Gertrude abuses to her mother as ineffectual, not only as a servant, but in the other role for which Elizabethan footmen were notorious, that of lover. She tells her mother that Hamlet will not be allowed to travel with her in the coach, but must run by its side because 'he gives no other milk, as I have another servant does' (III, ii, 44-5).[3] As Gertrude is obsessed by her sexual needs, her meaning is more than clear here. This is a specific as well as a general reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (IV, v, 71-2) because Ophelia in her madness calls for her coach in a passage of sexual reminiscence in which Shakespeare is, I think, referring, to the widespread belief, propagated by Montaigne among others, that coach rides were sexually stimulating for ladies.[4] There is no doubt that the authors of *Eastward Ho* have this scene in mind because Gertrude goes on to sing, later in this scene, an obscene parody of Ophelia's song (*Hamlet*, IV, v, 187-196). There is another reference to Ophelia's libidinousness later in the play when her drowning is referred to as a characteristic opportunity for her to lift her skirts (*Eastward Ho*, IV, i, 56-60).

This attack on *Hamlet* is undertaken in terms of those neo-classical doctrines of decorum already mentioned. The 'dignity of persons' required of tragedy is absent because the tragic hero is woefully lacking in the kind of resolution and manliness required of the hero, who according to Castelvetro ought to be decisive and ruthless:

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3 Reference is to the edition of C. G. Petter (London, 1973).

4 See my short article 'Another *Hamlet* Crux' in *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 243 (September 1998), 334ff.

> Quelle della tragedia sono reali, et hanno gli spiriti maggiori, et sono altiere, et vogliono troppo quello, che vogliono, et se è loro fatta injuria, o si danno ad intendere che sia loro fatta, non ricorrono agli magistrati a querrelarsi dello'ngiuriante, ne comportano la'ngiurio patientemente, ma si fanno da se ragione, secondo che appetito loro detta, et uccidono per vendetta i lontani e congiunti di sangue, et per disperatione non pure i congiunti di sangue, ma talhora anche sestessi.[5]

Castelvetro also goes on to say that the tragic hero ought equally to be an adept lover: 'ne per nozze, o per adempimento di desideri amorosi s'augumenta la loro alegrezza, dimorando essi, si può veramente dire in perpetue nozze et in continui solazzi amorosi...' (Quite an exhausting business being a neo-classical hero). Clearly, Hamlet totally fails to conform to this stereotype, indeed Shakespeare's concept of character, in this play at least, is precisely designed to resist the stereotyping that is the essential feature of neo-classical doctrines of characterization and that Jonson clearly favours in his own drama.

The criticism of Ophelia and Gertrude is equally related to neo-classical doctrine. Giraldi, for instance, insists that only decent women should appear in tragedy. Discussing 'decoro delle persone,' Giraldi insists that while comedy may depict 'persone di lasciva e di disonesta vita,' it is the province of tragedy to depict women as 'gravi, prudenti e accorte, e possono usare nel lor favellare sentenze morali, e pieno di senno.'[6] The suggestion is that neither Gertrude nor the sexually explicit Ophelia in her madness are suitably decorous. The hint that the relationship between Gertrude and Hamlet might be incestuous even seems to be anticipating the Freudian interpretation of *Hamlet*.

Within a year or so of contributing to *Eastward Ho*, Jonson seems to have been reviving his earlier play *Everyman In His Humour* by changing its setting from Italy to London and providing it with a new prologue that also launches into an attack on Shakespeare's dramaturgical

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5 Castelvetro, 123v.

6 G. G. Cinthio, 'Discorso ovvero lettera [...] intorno al comporre delle comedie a delle tragedie,' edited in *Scritti estetici* (Milan, 1864), 103f.

methods.[7] This time the attack is both on his failure to observe 'decorum of persons,' the lack of respect for the unities of time and place and the un-Aristotelian reliance on crude spectacle:

> To make a child now swaddled to proceed
> Man, and then shoot up in one beard and weed
> Past threescore years; or, with three rusty swords,
> And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
> Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,
> And in the tiring-house bring wounds to scars.
> He rather prays you will be pleased to see
> One such today as other plays should be:
> Where neither Chorus wafts you o'er the seas,
> Nor creaking throne comes down, the boys to please,
> Nor nimble squib is seen, to make afear'd
> The gentlewomen, nor roll'd bullet heard
> To say, it thunders, nor tempestuous drum
> Rumbles, to tell you when the storm doth come;
> But deeds and language such as men do use,
> And persons such as Comedy would choose
> When she would show an image of the times,
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes [...].[8]

Here the attack is much wider; not only are the two great sequences of history plays, the *Henry VI* tetralogy and the *Richard II, Henry IV* and *Henry V* sequence mocked as hopelessly incontinent of time and space, but Shakespeare's most recent (and greatest) play, *King Lear*, with its thunder and lightning is censured for its over-use of spectacle. Here again too, characterisation is criticised as sensational rather than decorous ('monsters' rather than 'men') and Jonson throws in for good measure an objection to language that is bombastic and overblown. It may be that Shakespeare is not the only target here, but he is certainly the most prominent. An accusation that Shakespeare's characterisation lacks human

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7 The date of the revision of *Every Man in his Humour* has been a matter of some controversy. The revised version was not published until Jonson issued his Folio collection in 1616, but E. K.Chambers has argued that the most likely occasion for the revision was in preparation for its Court performance in February 1605 (*Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford 1923), III, 360). This date would seem to fit in well with the apparent reference to *King Lear*, which was probably written in late 1604 or early 1605 (see Muir's Arden edition pp.xxii, xxiv). Chambers later revised the date of Jonson's prologue to 1606, presuming it to be a consequence of the Court performance.

8 J. W. Lever (ed.) *Every Man in his Humour, A Parallel Text of the 1601 Quarto and the 1616 Folio* (London, 1972), 5f.

qualities would seem, on the face of it, unconvincing, but from a neo-classical point of view his characters lack that representative quality that neo-classical theorists argue is essential to character realism and verisimilitude. Shakespeare's ability to create idiosyncratic characters, so much admired today, was in neo-Aristotelian criticism regarded as a blemish. Giraldi, for instance, argues that characters to seem real must conform to their types:

> Non dico di quello che dee la favola introdurre negli animi degli uomini per fargli migliori, ma di quello che conviene alla natura di chi fa, e di chi favella; la qual parte e tutta su il decoro. Conviene ad un capitano esercitato all'arme, essere ardito e valoroso, ad una donna, timida e demessa [...].[9]

If Jonson has *King Lear* specifically in mind in his prologue (as I think he has) then he may well be thinking of Lear's outbursts against his 'unkind daughters' whose ingratitude is 'More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child, /Than the sea-monster;' even Goneril's husband considers them 'tigers, not daughters.' There could hardly be less natural daughters than Goneril and Regan, and unnatural, to the neo-classical theorists, means lacking in verisimilitude, because women are (or should be) typically reticent and submissive. Certainly no one would accuse Goneril and Regan of being timid and mild-mannered. The accusation of inflated language also strikes home if we think of the substantial change that occurred in Jacobean drama in moving from the highly rhetorical style of Marlowe and Kyd in the early 1590's to the new colloquial realism characteristic of the satirical writers who came into fashion in the early years of the seventeenth century. Shakespeare's highly individual poetic style had become something of an anomaly in the Jacobean theatre by this time, having been formed and developed at the height of Marlowe's influence, though it had become much more subtly patterned than anything Marlowe had been capable of. Jonson's own style, in contrast, in both comedy and tragedy, was remarkable for a greater clarity and directness:

> So that my reader is assured, I now
> Mean what I speak: and still will keep that vow.[10]

This again is in full accord with the new classical theorists, Giraldi, for instance, requires the language of drama to be 'nudo, chiaro, puro, e per

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9 Cinthio, 'Discorso' in *Scritti estetici*, 91.

10 Ben Jonson, 'An Epistle to Master John Selden' II. 27f.

dir breve senza questo sconcio e biasimevole liscio,' and speaking of those 'sentenze' that should be one of the features of tragedy he warns 'che lo splendor delle parole non offuschi la luce delle sentenze, e le faccia divenir meno pregiate e meno efficaci di quel che debbono essere.'[11]

Clearly, Shakespeare was not easily persuaded to change his 'gothic' ways, for Jonson returns to the attack yet again in the play that followed *Volpone, Epicoene or the Silent Woman* (1609) and this time the allusion is to Shakespeare's recent tragedy on a classical subject, *Antony and Cleopatra*. This allusion to Shakespeare's play has largely been lost to modern readers and it is indeed less prominent than the other allusions we have been considering. It comes in Act IV of Jonson's play when the noise-sensitive Morose, having recently got married, discovers he has married a termagant. He will, he says, do anything rather than continue to suffer the noisy predations of his loquacious wife and this includes:

> I would sit out a play, that were nothing but fights at sea, drum, trumpet, and target. (IV, iv, 16-18)

Herford and the Simpsons, in their monumental edition of Ben Jonson's works, speculate on the possible plays that Morose might have in mind, but none of the three plays they mention combine the elements Morose describes.[12] No modern edition that I have been able to consult comes up with anything better, but in the eighteenth century, the actor and friend of Dr. Johnson, Thomas Davies, has the air of stating the obvious in assuming that the reference is to *Antony and Cleopatra:*

> Ben Jonson in *The Silent Woman*, has apparently, though obliquely, treated this tragedy as a play full of nothing but empty noise and fights by sea, with drum, trumpet and target; nor does Dr. Johnson, I think, rank it amongst those of our author's dramas which are greatly esteemed.[13]

Davies is surely right, for there are few Jacobean plays that have both fights at sea (Herford and the Simpsons mention just three) and are also conspicuous for the noise of drums, trumpets and the banging of shields (which implies an army moving about the stage rather than naval

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11 Cinthio, 'Discorso' in *Scritti estetici*, 102f.

12 C. H. Herford and P. & E. Simpson (eds.) *Ben Jonson* (Oxford, 1950), X, 36. References to the play are to this edition (Volume V, 1937).

13 T. Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies* (London, 1784), II, 334.

encounters). The fluidity of *Antony and Cleopatra* is notorious, as is the constant coming and going of Roman and Egyptian forces, often preceded or concluded by 'alarums' or the 'flourish' of trumpets that uniquely pepper the stage directions in the 1623 Folio (the only authentic text). The complete indifference to the neo-classical unities of time and place in this play would make it an obvious target of Jonson's scorn and the movement and noise would provide just that element of spectacle that Jonson had been criticising in the prologue to *Every Man in his Humour.*

There is also a thematic connection between the two plays, which has a direct bearing on the question of character decorum. *Epicoene* has as one of its main themes: the cacophony that arises when gender balance is disturbed. Morose is the most obvious victim of female dominance when his 'wife' (who turns out to be a boy in disguise as a woman) proves to be an uncontrollable termagant, but the theme is repeated in Mistress Otter's bullying of Captain Otter and the 'collegiate' of dominant women which Mistress Otter seeks to join. *Antony and Cleopatra* has the same theme, as Antony increasingly succumbs to Cleopatra's feminine powers. The important difference between the two plays is that while Jonson's play treats the theme comically, with the implication that the threat is not serious, Shakespeare treats the theme tragically and therefore as a real and substantial threat. There are many examples of dominant women in Jacobean comedy, for this was a pleasing way of asserting to a predominantly masculine audience that female dominance was not a serious problem in their society, and it therefore defied decorum to treat such a theme tragically. Women in neo-classical theory, as we have already illustrated, were required to be obedient and submissive, only evil women could be shown to be dominant. In Shakespeare's play, however, Cleopatra is not only dominant, but also feminine and attractive. This is clearly subversive, for Cleopatra is both 'lasciva' and 'disonesta' and yet presented with tragic seriousness. The problems of handling such a theme in this way is no doubt why neo-classical treatments of the story of Antony and Cleopatra, and there are many, including Giraldi's own *Cleopatra*, tend to treat the two lovers separately. Thus Mary Sidney's translation of Garnier's *Marc Antoine* deals almost exclusively with the tragedy of Antony, while Samuel Daniel writes a sequel that is exclusively concerned with the tragedy of Cleopatra after Antony's death. Jonson's play then, is an implicit criticism of Shakespeare's handling of his theme in terms of

neo-classical 'decoro delle persone.' In Shakespeare's next play, *Coriolanus*, he answers his neo-classical critics *tout court*, by writing the finest neo-classical play in the English language.

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'That Italian Didapper': Giordano Bruno and England*

John Gatt-Rutter

Those words from the *Pensées* of Blaise Pascal – 'Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraye,' especially 'ces espaces infinis' in the plural – suggest the profoundly Christian Pascal's acceptance, by the 1660s, of the anti-Christian Bruno's post-Copernican cosmology of an infinite, de-centred universe, as does Pascal's acceptance, possibly via Montaigne, of the notion, variously supposed to have originated either with Empedocles or with the lately discredited Hermes Trismegistus, but which Bruno had emphatically made his own, of the universe as an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.[1] Bruno thus, though submerged – burnt as a heretic in 1600, his books placed on the Index, his name buried in almost total silence – keeps resurfacing in unexpected places.

One of these unexpected places, now familiar to every student of Bruno, is a book published in 1604 by George Abbot, shortly to become

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* I would like to thank Susan Walker for her help with bibliographical searches for this paper.

1 Bruno's Teofilo asserts this in the fifth dialogue of *De la causa, principio e uno*. See Giordano Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani* G. Gentile (ed.) (3rd. ed.), revd. G. Aquilecchia, (Florence. Sansoni, 1958, repr. 1985), Vol. I, *Dialoghi metafisici*, 321, and footnote 2, which refers to Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, Braunschvicg (ed.) (Paris. Hachette, 1904), II.72, tome 1, 73. There appears to have been very little written about the relationship between Giordano Bruno and Blaise Pascal (1623-62), and I have found no explicit mention of Bruno in Pascal's works. Volker Reinecke in 'Blaise Pascal und Giordano Bruno - Über den Streit von Religion und Philosophie,' *Sinn und Form* 45 (1993), 742-56, as his title indicates, addresses the interface, and the potential conflict, between religious belief and philosophical reason in the two thinkers, without enquiring into any *rapports de fait* between them, but, justifiably, presuming that Pascal, in his multiple capacity as mathematician, scientist, philosopher, theologian and polemicist, was fully cognizant of Bruno's position and of developments in that position during the seventy years since his arrest by the Inquisition in 1591. Reinecke invokes Pascal's 'silence éternel' ('das sprachlose Schweigen der unendlichen Räume,' 746). The scientist and theologian Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), with whose works Pascal was familiar, attacked Bruno, among others, in his *L'impiété des déistes et des plus subtils libertins découverte et réfutée par raison de philosophie et de théologie*, 2 vols., (Paris, 1624). See S. Ricci, *La fortuna del pensiero di Giordano Bruno: 1600-1750* (Florence. Le Lettere, 1990), 86ff.

Archbishop of Canterbury. In a passage reeking of contempt, and having very little connection with the book's anti-Catholic polemic, Abbot talks of Bruno – by that time unmentionable in print – as 'that Italian Diadapper' who 'vndertooke among very many other matters to set on foote the opinion of Copernicus, that the earth did goe round, and the heavens did stand still; wheras in truth it was his owne head which rather did run round, & his braines did not stand still.'[2]

A 'didapper' (or 'divedapper') is now more commonly known as a dabchick, a bird which spends much of its time swimming under water, to surface in unpredictable places.[3] Abbot's text seems to imply this sort of behaviour. Bruno had paid a brief visit to Oxford earlier that same year, 1583. Returning there, in Abbot's words, 'his hart was on fire, to make himselfe by some worthy exploite, to become famous in that celebrious place.'

Abbot himself is in fact unpredictably making that Italian didapper resurface in his own book four years after Bruno's death at the stake, and in the very same year as the appearance of a new star in the constellation of Serpentarius in 1604 and six years before Galileo's discovery of the moons of Jupiter in 1610 – both events bearing out important features of Bruno's post-Copernican cosmology and making that Italian didapper resurface unpredictably, and embarrassingly, again and again. It must be presumed – and is indeed possible – that Abbot was unaware that Bruno

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2 George Abbot, *The Reasons which Doctour Hill hath Brought...* (Oxford. Joseph Barnes, 1604), 88f. The passage was first brought to the attention of Bruno scholars by R. McNulty, 'Bruno at Oxford,' *Renaissance News*, XIII (1960), 300-5, and has since been often quoted and discussed, most recently in the overview by G. Aquilecchia, 'Giordano Bruno in Inghilterra (1583-1585). Documenti e testimonianze,' *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, I (1995), 21-42 (see 33-6).

3 The Oxford English Dictionary gives two instances of the figurative usage – the earliest – from the same period as Bruno and Abbott, and a couple of later ones that are, I think, more interesting. One comes from *The Art of Sinking* by Alexander Pope and others (1727), which reads: 'The didappers are authors, that keep themselves long out of sight, under water, and come up now and then, where you least expected them.' The second dates from 1851 and appears in Charles C. Colton's *Lacon, or Many Things in Few Words* Vol. I, 163, and runs as follows: 'Wilkes was one of those didappers, whom, if you had stripped naked, and thrown over Westminster bridge, you might have met on the very next day, with [...] a laced coat upon his back, and money in his pocket.'

had been burnt by the Church of Rome as a heretic, or he would surely have referred to such a salient fact. This possibility is suggested by the fact that the astronomer Kepler only passed on the news about Bruno's death in 1608 to Mathias Bernegger, who possessed several of Bruno's Latin works.[4] If, on the other hand, Abbot was taking Bruno's death to be common knowledge, that makes his derisive sally about Bruno even harder to interpret, and it may suggest some kind of tacit understanding between the Church of England and the Church of Rome which might be borne out by the ambiguities of the new monarch James I's foreign policy right up to his apparent abandonment of the Protestant cause in Europe and even of his own daughter, the so-called 'winter Queen,' Elizabeth of Bohemia, in 1620. Even before the accession of James I, Bruno was in fact widely regarded with hostility in England, and Queen Elizabeth is reported as having called him a dreamer, a criminal and an atheist.[5]

These reactions are understandable, if even a (conservatively) Copernican astronomer like Johannes Kepler combined Queen Elizabeth's abhorrence for Bruno's anti-Christian religion with the vertigo and horror over a limitless and decentred universe which Abbot shared with Pascal. 'Bruno, burnt in Rome, asserted a religion of all the vanities, converting God into the world, into circles, into points,' he wrote in his letter to Matthias Bernegger of 5 April 1608.[6] And he was to complain in his work on the nova in Serpentarius: 'But Brunus makes the world so infinite

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4 See S. Ricci, 'Giordano Bruno e il *Northumberland Circle* (1600-1630),' *Rinascimento,* XXV (1985), 335-55 (*cfr.* p.351 and footnote 61, now in S. Ricci, *La fortuna del pensiero di Giordano Bruno*, 49-80, which describes the very slender route by which the information travelled.)

5 Giulio Cesare Lagalle's words from *De phoenomenis orbis lunae* (Venice, 1612) are quoted by G. Aquilecchia in *Schede bruniane (1950-1991)* (Florence. Vecchiarelli, 1993), 17, n. 42, and 59, n. 65, from G. Galilei, *Opere* (Florence. Barbera, 1892), Vol. III, Tome 1, 352. Elizabeth had received from Bruno a finely bound volume containing *La Cena de le Ceneri, Lo Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante, De la causa, principio e uno* and *De l'infinito, universo e mondi*, with the royal coat-of-arms stamped on it, which, a century later, came into the hands of John Toland.

6 My English translation: 'Brunum Romae crematum [...] Religionem omnium vanitatum asseruit, Deum in mundum in circulos, in puncta convertit.' See Johannes Kepler, *Werke* (Munich, 1938), I:142, quoted in S. Ricci, 'Giordano Bruno e il *Northumberland Circle*' and in S. Clucas '*The Furye from above:* Giordano Bruno's *Degli Eroici Furori*, George Chapman and the Northumberland circle,' *Discorsi,* 11.1 (1991), 7-37 (see p. 36).

as to make as many worlds as there are fixed stars and, of our own region of moving bodies, just one among innumerable worlds [...] the mere thought of which brings with it I know not what hidden horror.'[7]

John Donne was close to the London circles most receptive to Bruno's ideas, first that of Sir Walter Raleigh, later that of the 'Wizard Earl,' Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland; yet Donne displayed the same cosmic anxiety, particularly in *An Anatomie of the World – The First Anniversary* (1611), as, for instance, in the lines:

> And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;
> The Sun is lost, and th'earth, and no man's wit
> Can well direct him where to look for it.
> And freely men confess that this world's spent,
> When in the Planets, and the Firmament
> They seek so many new; they see that this
> Is crumbled out again to his Atomies.
> 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
> All just supply, and all Relation. [lines 205-14][8]

Because Bruno's ideas (a decentred, infinite and uniform universe of innumerable worlds all made of atoms) were so disturbing, it is not surprising that the reaction was to smother them in silence, or worse. Bruno's British follower, the Scotsman Alexander Dickson, left inscribed at the end of his copy of Bruno's *De l'infinito* the cryptic remark, 'Ill [*sic*] vostro malignare non giova nulla.'[9] If the remark is directed at Bruno (possibly in riposte to the book's sardonic close), its import is indeed grave. Given that Dickson was Sir Philip Sidney's secretary, his remark

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7 'Sed Brunus ita infinitum facit mundum, ut quot sunt stellae fixae, tot mundos, et hanc nostram regionem mobilium unum ex innumerabilibus mundis faciat [...] Quae sola cogitatio nescio quid horroris occulti prae se fert' from *De stella nova in pede Serpentarii*, quoted by E. Panowsky, *Galileo as Critic of the Arts* (The Hague, 1954).

8 John Donne. *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne* G. A. Stringer (Gen. Ed.) Vol. 6, *The Anniversaries and the Epicedes and Obsequies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis. Indiana University Press, 1995), 11f. The first eight lines of this passage are used as illustrative quotation in T. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge MS. Harvard U.P., 1957), 194.

9 On Bruno's relationship with Dickson, see Giordano Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani* Vol. 1, 214. On Dickson's copy of Bruno's *De l'infinito, universo e mondi*, see R. Sturlese, *Bibliografia censimento e storia delle antiche stampe di Giordano Bruno* (Florence. Leo S. Olschki, 1987), xxiv.

may provide a clue to the total silence regarding Bruno from within the Sidney camp, which Bruno had assiduously cultivated. The remark may, of course, be addressed to Bruno's enemies, or perhaps to Dickson's own, rather than to Bruno.

However, there were influential Englishmen who were interested in Bruno's ideas, and Dickson indeed provides one of the links between Bruno and the Northumberland circle via his friendship with Nicholas Hill and Walter Warner.[10] It is to Daniel Massa that we owe the first serious enquiry into the traces left by Bruno in the circle of thinkers associated with the Earl of Northumberland in the early years of the new century.[11] There is no evidence that any of these had met Bruno when he was in England from 1583 to 1585, and their interest in him must have been mediated via the earlier circle associated with Raleigh and other interconnected intermediaries. One of these was Thomas Digges – first in England known to have embraced not only the Copernican system but also the idea of an infinite universe (though not the uniform, centreless, and relativized universe posited by Bruno).[12] Another was John Dee, the Queen's physician, reputed also as a magus.[13] And a third, William Gilbert, the theorist of magnetism as a force pervading matter, including the heavenly bodies. Bruno's near-contemporary, Gilbert (1544-1603) was author of *De magnete* (apparently already written by the early 1580s, but not published until 1600) and *De mundo* (published posthumously in 1651), which were to provide a link between Bruno's cosmology and Newtonian mechanics.[14]

Among the Northumberland circle itself, Massa identified Bruno as the main source of the atomic theory further developed by Nicholas

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10 See S. Clucas, '*In campo fantastico:* Alexander Dickson, Walter Warner and Brunian Mnemonics' in *Giordano Bruno 1583-1585: The English Experience / L'esperienza inglese* M. Ciliberto and N. Mann (eds.) (Florence. Leo S. Olschki, 1997), 37-59.

11 D. Massa, 'Giordano Bruno's ideas in seventeenth-century England,' *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 38 (1977), 227-42.

12 See M. A. Granada, 'Thomas Digges, Giordano Bruno e il copernicanesimo in Inghilterra' in *Giordano Bruno* Ciliberto and Mann (eds), 125-55.

13 On Dee, see F. A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London, Boston and Henley. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 79-93.

14 See H. Gatti, *Giordano Bruno and Renaissance Science* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London. Cornell U.P., 1999), 33 and Ch 5: 'Bruno and the Gilbert Circle' 86-98. For Gilbert's place in the development of the post-Copernican system, see Kuhn, 246.

Hill, showing textual correspondences between the two. Massa also drew attention to the interest which the most impressive thinker in the Northumberland circle, Thomas Harriot, showed in Bruno's atomism.[15] This is now recognized as being a key component in the shift from the scientific paradigm which had prevailed since the middle ages to a more modern one. Saverio Ricci has since expanded on Massa's findings, showing how Harriot and his associate Lower vindicated Bruno's and Gilbert's cosmology in the face of Kepler's rejection of it.[16]

If Bruno's role as an important link in the development of a new natural science in England has thus been incontrovertibly demonstrated, his impact on the Elizabethan mind generally, including its more literary manifestations, has often been sensed to be equally or even more crucial, but is less easily proved. Traces of Bruno's literary influence have been detected by Hilary Gatti in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, with their 'intellectual heroes,'[17] and to this I will return. Amelia Buono Hodgart traces correspondences in imagery and language, themes and motifs and structure, between Bruno's comedy *Il Candelaio* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, but sees Shakespeare's play as a reversal of Bruno's privileging of the love of knowledge over the love of woman in *Degli eroici furori.*[18]

This reference calls to mind an unexpected connection with *Antony and Cleopatra*. Enobarbus's words in Act 2, Sc. 2 (lines 242-4) – 'Other women cloy / The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry / Where most she satisfies' – sound like a brilliant condensation of a passage from *Degli eroici furori,* Parte II, Dial. 3: Liberio glosses the second reply of the eyes to the heart: '[...] ed in tanto non vi è sazietà, per quanto sempre s'abbia appetito, e per consequenza gusto; acciò non sia come nelli cibi del corpo, il quale con la sazietà perde il gusto [...] dove se passa certo termine e fine, viene ad aver fastidio e nausea.'[19] Yet, it seems Shakespeare is reversing Bruno's drift and perhaps, by the free play of

15 See note 11 above.

16 Ricci, *La fortuna del pensiero di G. B.*, 50-79.

17 H. Gatti, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge: Giordano Bruno in England* (London and New York. Routledge, 1989).

18 A. B. Hodgart, '*Love's Labour's Lost* di William Shakespeare e *Il Candelaio* di Giordano Bruno,' *Studi Secenteschi*, XIX (1978), 3-21.

19 *Dialoghi italiani* Vol.2, 1136.

irony, undercutting both Bruno's *eroico furore* and Cleopatra's sensual attractions. Bruno's 'Argomento' in the *Furori*, of course, emphatically devalues sexual passion as an avenue to the heroic enthusiasm of his title.

Antony and Cleopatra is Shakespeare's 'Egyptian' play, and, to a Brunian, suggests a strong connection with Bruno's Egyptian theme, derived from the apocryphal Hermes Trismegistus, of an ancient religion which had decayed under the impact of foreign conquest. Gilberto Sacerdoti's *Nuovo cielo, nuova terra: La rivoluzione copernicana di 'Antonio e Cleopatra' di Shakespeare* and some subsequent essays by him[20] draw many links with Bruno's works. *Nuovo cielo, nuova terra* sees Shakespeare's tragedy as capturing both the moment of the downfall of the ancient Egyptian religion and its post-Copernican rediscovery or 'revelation' as a development of late Renaissance neo-Platonism shared by Bruno and Shakespeare and substantially transmitted from one to the other. Sacerdoti does not pick up the verbal Brunian connection of 'she makes hungry where most she satisfies,' but carries out the far more important work of relating this shared motif to the Biblical and neo-Platonist cult of Wisdom, Sophia, Sapientia.[21] Sacerdoti extends this link through the motif of the dark faces of Shakespeare's Cleopatra and the lady of Bruno's *Degl'Heroici furori* to the black face of the beloved in the *Song of Solomon* (also associated with Wisdom). Moreover, Sacerdoti suggestively associates this whole nexus with the Brunoesque character of Berowne's devotion to an ebony-hued lady in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act 4, Sc. 3).[22] In a radical re-interpretation of Shakespeare's 'Egyptian' tragedy, Sacerdoti presents Bruno as a central and challenging, but slyly

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20 G. Sacerdoti, *Nuovo cielo, nuova terra: La rivoluzione copernicana di 'Antonio e Cleopatra' di Shakespeare* (Bologna. Il Mulino, 1990); '"Cosa significa questo?" Sopra uno "strano trucco" shakespeariano in *Antonio e Cleopatra,' Intersezioni,* XII.2 (April 1992), 35-62; 'Tre re, Erode di Giudea e un bambino,' *Intersezioni,* XIV.2 (August 1994), 171-209. A shorter English version of this article, 'Three Kings, Herod of Jewry, and a Child: Apocalypse and Infinity of the World in *Antony and Cleopatra'* appeared in *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* M. Marrapodi and G. Melchiori (eds.) (Newark/London. University of Delaware Press, 1999).

21 Sacerdoti, *Nuovo cielo,* 29-37.

22 *Ibid.,* 214-314.

dissimulated, part of the play's cultural hinterland (and, by implication, that of Shakespeare's later work generally).

More specifically Brunoesque implications are traced in the 'last supper' before the battle of Actium in Act IV, Scene 2. Here Antony attempts to generate an emotionally charged atmosphere so as to keep the loyalty of his Romans to fight fellow Romans, making the wavering Enobarbus exclaim 'And I, an ass, am onion-eyed' (the supper, as well as the ass and the onion, being Brunian figurative and satirical currency). Sacerdoti contrasts this with the earlier feast in Act II, Scene 7, wild but eirenic, where Antony and his fellow revellers end up reeling drunk so that the world spins, as Copernicus and Bruno claimed. Sacerdoti further finds in Antony and Cleopatra Act I, Sc. 1 –

Cleo. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
Ant. There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.
Cleo. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.
Ant. Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth

– an echo of Bruno's evocation of his new cosmology of an infinite universe, itself echoing the *Apocalypse*. Sacerdoti argues that Shakespeare is practising a 'manifestazione-occultamento della verità,' given that 'il genere di verità che questo dramma maschera da frivolezze continuò per altri due secoli ad essere una faccenda tanto seria da richiedere, se non il silenzio, un particolare *genere* di discorso.'[23] Shakespeare may thus have learnt from Bruno, and even more, from his death, to use a highly allusive discourse.

Sacerdoti seeks to decode such an allusive discourse also in *Love's Labour's Lost.*[24] He links the hunt theme in Bruno's *Spaccio della bestia trionfante,* a veiled attack on the sacrifice of the Mass, with the even more opaque motif of the hunt in *Love's Labour's Lost.* Sacerdoti reads this latter as a hint to Queen Elizabeth to establish her authority in matters

23 Sacerdoti, 'Tre Re ...', 208. (See also 'Three Kings ...').

24 Sacerdoti, 'Caccia al cervo e *potestas ecclesiastica* in *Pene d'amore perdute,*' *Intersezioni,* XVII.2 (August 1997), 224-9.

ecclesiastical, as Henri of Navarre had done by recognizing the Catholic Mass in order to assume the throne of France.[25]

Stephen Clucas finds Brunian consonances in the poems of George Chapman (one of the Northumberland circle) in the Neo-Platonist elements and derived imagery common to both writers, but greater dissonances in the two writers' widely diverging religious perspective, Bruno's that of *Natura est deus in rebus*, Chapman's a resolute Protestantism.[26]

There are conflicting views of the relationship between Bruno's writings and those of Sir Philip Sidney, as there are conflicting interpretations of the anti-Calvinist passages in *Lo spaccio de la bestia trionfante*[27] and the anti-Petrarchist introduction to *De gl'Heroici Furori* – both of them works which Bruno dedicated to Sidney. David Farley-Hills points out a convergence between Sidney and the Bruno of the *Furori,* Sidney possibly influencing Bruno in the anti-Petrarchan direction, and a possible Bruno influence on Sonnet 31 of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*.[28] More broadly, Peter Lloyd sees Bruno's proposition of an infinite universe without any fixed centre, physical or ideological, and his

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25 It was once suggested by Benedetto Croce, on the basis of word-play on their respective names, that the character of Berowne/Biron was named after Bruno. Berowne's well-known speech with its word-play on 'light' ('Why, all delights are vain [...]' I.1.30 ff.), as well as the initial resolution by the King of Navarre's court to abjure the pursuit of women for the pursuit of wisdom, both suggest intertextual dialogue with the theme, language and imagery of Bruno's *De gl'Heroici Furori* and subject them to an ironic reversal.

26 S. Clucas, *'The Furye from above:* Giordano Bruno's *Degli Eroici Furori*, George Chapman and the Northumberland circle,' *Discorsi,* 11.1 (1991), 7-37.

27 Gatti, *G. B. and Renaissance Science*, interprets *Lo spaccio* as a satire on the Papacy and on the Counter-Reformation carried out by the Council of Trent. This interpretation undercuts the critique of Calvinism, and Gatti generally argues from the texts that a comradely understanding operates between Bruno and Sidney, 223-8, 233-7.

28 D. Farley-Hills, 'The *Argomento* of Bruno's *De gli Eroici Furori* and Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella,' The Modern Language Review*, 87 (1992), 1-17. However, an anti-Petrarchist influence of Sidney on Bruno, if any, must pre-date Bruno's already anti-Petrarchist play *Il Candelaio*, which was published in 1582, and must therefore also pre-date Bruno's arrival in England in 1583. Bruno and Sidney briefly coincided in Milan in 1578, but such a brief encounter is hardly likely to have engendered Bruno's anti-Petrarchism, which seems so central to his literary personality and is so rooted in the Italian anti-Petrarchist tradition.

'discovery of new perspectives,' as impinging on the revision of Sidney's *Arcadia* and also upon the unfolding of Raleigh's *History of the World.* 'Old theories about the universe,' he comments, 'were still held, but they were held in doubt.' Specifically on Sidney, Lloyd remarks: 'The complex world as seen by Bruno, with its multiple choices, paradoxes, contraries, and subtle interrelationships – but without its transcendentalism – is reflected in the *Arcadia.*'[29] On Raleigh's *History of the World*, Lloyd writes: 'God moves in a Ptolemaic universe, but as the narrative develops, God's presence is not so evident [...] Raleigh's History unfolds before us a poor record of nations warring and enslaving themselves and others. One is not aware of the possibility of redemption or of the working of a divine plan.'[30]

Bruno's close contemporary, Spenser (1552-99), linked to the circle of Leicester and Sidney, is, like them, sharply differentiated from Bruno by virtue of his strong Christian adherence, but the *Astraea* cult of Queen Elizabeth may be an important point of contact between Spenser and Bruno, and the Blatant Beast sets up irresistible echoes of the *Bestia Trionfante*. However, Alex Barnes finds Spenser implicitly taking issue with Bruno in the 'Mutabilitie Cantos' of *The Faerie Queene.*[31]

What do these detailed, but highly speculative, enquiries add up to? What can we say about a possible Brunian 'influence' in England? How do we define it? In what direction, if any, did it impel the course of English culture? The real impact of Bruno on England is imponderable, yet the imperative to ponder it is irresistible.

I would suggest that Bruno was a catalyst in the startlingly rapid coming of age of English intellectual culture and the Elizabethan imagination, most visible in the theatre from about 1590 onwards. He was a catalyst by the sheer force of his provocation and by the uncompromising reach of his thinking, his breaking of all bounds. Historians of science and philosophy have remarked that he is the most

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29 P. Lloyd, *Perspectives and Identities: The Elizabethan Writer's Search to Know his World* (London. The Rubicon Press, 1989), 158. I would question Lloyd's parenthetical assumption of Bruno's transcendentalism.

30 *Ibid.*, 214.

31 A. Barnes, 'Spenser's spherical imagery in the Mutabilitie Cantos,' *Rinascimento,* 34 (1994), 377-88.

ambitious and radical system-builder of the European Renaissance.[32] Certainly, he provided the strongest single impetus to question the whole of reality. I would like to suggest Bruno's function as a catalyst in Elizabethan and Jacobean culture under three heads – the cult of secrecy; the scientific revolution; the radically agnostic[33] and this-worldly new literature of human action, especially in the theatre.

Of these, the most direct and visible effect is the scientific one, particularly through the Northumberland circle, and most specifically through Thomas Harriot. Not only was Bruno the only philosopher to posit an infinite, de-centred universe, and in the most challenging manner. He was also crucial, in the view of Thomas Kuhn and others, in perceiving the necessary link between the atomic minima and that infinite universe – a link without which the transformation into our modern picture of the physical universe which lasted from Newton to Einstein could not have been achieved. In *The Copernican Revolution*, Kuhn supplies the science-historical context of Bruno's contribution to natural philosophy. He argues that Bruno's 'principal contribution [to the establishment of the post-Copernican cosmology of an infinite, uniform universe] was recognizing this obscure affinity between the ancient and modern doctrines' of atomism and infinity.[34] This is an achievement of the scientific imagination, an instance of the primacy of hypothesis-building over inductive experimentation.

We can argue about how far Bruno promoted the method of scientific observation and systematic experimentation; and we can accept with Yates and many others since that Bruno dismissed the mechanistic model of the universe in favour of the animistic.[35] Yet we can also agree

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32 Gatti, *G.B. and Renaissance Science* is, in effect, largely devoted to demonstrating this.

33 *Ibid.*, 228. Gatti remarks that this radical relativization of all religions was warmly noted by John Toland a century later.

34 Kuhn, 236f. Gatti, *G. B. and Renaissance Science*, 128, 143, 150, accepts Kuhn's point, and posits Bruno's meta-mathematical thinking as a 'crisis epistemology' attempting to grapple with the problems arising from such a radical 'paradigm shift.'

35 To be sure, up to the period of his arrest in Venice in 1591, Bruno seemed to be moving more and more towards magical symbolism, reading nature as hieroglyph rather than structured matter. W. Shumaker, *Natural Magic and Modern Science: Four Treatises, 1590-1657* (Binghamton, N.Y. Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1989), 62-9, strongly reiterates this claim, originally put forward by Yates.

with Gatti that he was leaping clean over the mechanistic science that prevailed between his century and the twentieth, interrogating the very processes by which we attempt to think matter.[36]

Secrecy – the second cultural category in which Bruno appears to have acted as catalyst – is a feature regularly remarked upon by scholars in connection with philosophers and scientists of the period generally, but particularly with Bruno.[37] John Bossy goes so far as to argue that Bruno, using the pseudonym of 'Henry Fagot,' was engaged in espionage against his host and protector the French ambassador in London.[38] Bossy's thesis is vigorously contested by most Bruno scholars. Giovanni Aquilecchia, for instance, dismisses Bossy's argument regarding the disguised hand and use of Hispanicized French in 'Henry Fagot's' secret reports to Walsingham.[39] It would, however, fit in with Yates's thesis that Bruno was engaged on a mission by Henri III to thwart the machinations of the extremists of the Catholic League, led by the Guise family, who were using the French Embassy in London as a channel of communication with the imprisoned Mary Stuart, daughter of Mary of Guise. The Ambassador, Michel de Castelnau, was caught between his king and the powerful Guise faction, who were not well pleased with his services to them.[40]

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36 Gatti, *G. B. and Renaissance Science*, 143-203, (esp. p.200).

37 *Ibid.*, 19f. Gatti for instance, refers to the Pythagorean cult of secrecy discussed by Smitho and Teofilo in the first dialogue of Bruno's *La cena de le ceneri.*

38 J. Bossy, *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (Yale U. P., 1991. London. Vintage, 1992). The pseudonym 'Fagot' is of some interest. In French the word corresponds to the English 'faggot, bundle of sticks etc' but also, colloquially, means 'uncouth person; former convict, ticket-of-leave man; idle tale.' *Il y a fagots et fagots* is equivalent to 'there are all sorts' and *sentir le fagot* is 'to be suspected of heresy.' 'Faggot' in English according to the O.E.D. is: '1) Bundle of sticks; 2) With special reference to the burning of heretics alive; [...] (b) the embroidered figure of a faggot, which heretics who had recanted were obliged to wear on their sleeve, as an emblem of what they had merited. [...] 6) A term of abuse or contempt applied to a woman.'

39 See Aquilecchia, *Schede bruniane (1950-1991)*, xxv.

40 On this point, and arguing mostly against it, see Bossy, 162-4. However, Bossy's own evidence on pp. 15, 128 and 131 points in this direction. For Yates's argument about Bruno's political mission, see her *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 180f and 229. Yates's *Astraea. The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London and Boston. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), gives the broader context of this political history (see esp. pp. 80-7, 109-10, 164-8).

John Florio, who turned out perhaps Bruno's only loyal and lasting friend in England (other than the French ambassador, Michel de Castelnau), was living, like Bruno, at the French embassy in London between 1583 and 1585 as tutor in Castelnau's household, and is also under suspicion of being a secret agent for Walsingham. Yates cites William Vaughan in *The Golden Fleece* of 1626 addressing Florio regarding 'your friend Master Secretarie Walsingham.'[41] Bossy does not consider the possibility that 'Henry Fagot' was Florio, but this would appear to be excluded since Fagot was acting as chaplain to Castelnau.

There is also a certain air of secrecy about the six dialogues which Bruno wrote in Italian and published in London but which fictitiously showed Venice or Paris as the place of publication (or, in the case of the *Explicatio triginta sigillorum*, none at all).[42] That is one way of lying low and covering one's tracks. Perhaps also some sort of secret underground organization – which, after all, was common to both Catholics and Protestants – was part of his program in promoting his own new religion, and it is not too far-fetched to take literally Bruno's boast, reported at his trial, that he had set up a secret network of *Giordanisti* in Germany. In any case, freethinkers, commonly referred to as 'atheists,' and scientists, all too readily suspected of black arts, were extremely vulnerable to marginalization and worse. John Dee, reputed to be a magician, had his house and library at Mortlake burnt down and ended his life in poverty. Rumours and Catholic propaganda portrayed Raleigh and his circle as a 'school of atheism.' The charges against Marlowe, who was one of that circle, involved blasphemy and atheism, and his murder shortly after those charges were made seems to have been

41 See F. A. Yates, *John Florio: the life of an Italian in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge, 1934, repr. New York. Octagon Books, 1968), 85f.

42 Aquilecchia makes a very convincing case in explanation of Bruno's choice of Italian over Latin for his London works and for them alone – with the only other exception of the rather different *Il candelaio* and his lost early work, *L'Arca di Noè*. He explains it as a choice in favour of Italianate London, especially including court circles, with its freedom from the Aristotelian dogmatism of the universities, and also hints at the modernizing and nationalist implications of the choice. See G. Aquilecchia, 'L'adozione del volgare nei dialoghi londinesi di Giordano Bruno (Appunti per una interpretazione storica)' in *Schede bruniane,* 243-52.

connected with his undercover activity as a double agent.[43] Conspiracies being rife then, almost ubiquitous, as in a Cold War situation, secrecy was a necessary cover for suspect ideas.

Frances Yates has associated Bruno's legacy with the mysterious order of the Rosicrucians, which surfaced shortly after his execution.[44] Their Christian mysticism distances them from Bruno, but he seems to have been pivotal to the tendency of men of learning to combine two strategies: on the one hand, the open attempt to win the support of sovereigns for their programs for the betterment of mankind; on the other, the didapper strategy of diving under water, networking secretively together to further their high-minded ends in the name of a religion that transcends sectarian strife or dynastic rivalry. When the tendency towards such secret societies coalesced into Freemasonry, it comes as no surprise that Bruno was adopted as one of its tutelary spirits, the Hermetic mystique and the *eroici furori* complementing the scientific rationale of the utopian faith in human progress.[45] Bruno's more cryptic writings, his precarious career, and especially his trial and execution, must all have helped to act as catalysts in the cult of secrecy.

Bruno's effect as a catalyst in the third sphere, that of imaginative writing in England, seems to me extremely curious and indirect. His varied and original development of the dialogue form and related genres (such as the poem sequence with commentary in *Degli eroici furori*) in the Italian dialogues which he wrote and published in England appears to have had no direct influence there.[46] (The greatest dialogue in English literature, written, however, in Latin, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, dates back to near the beginning of Bruno's century). In fact, no self-evidently

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43 See C. Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (London. Jonathan Cape, 1991). Nicholl's thesis of a subversive, 'atheistic' influence of Bruno on Marlowe, or at least of the latter's interest in the former, is supported by D. Farley-Hills, 'Tamburlaine and the mad priest of the sun,' *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* Vol. 2 (1992), 36-49.

44 See F. A.Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).

45 *Ibid.*, 206-219. Hubert Dethier's 'Masonic Praxis and the Hermetic Tradition from Bruno to Shaftesbury' *Tijdschrift voor de Studie van de Verlichting en van het Vrije Denken*, 12 (1984), 233-52, despite its title, focusses on utopian literature in relation to the Hermetic and Masonic tradition.

46 See note 42 above.

straightforward literary influence of Bruno's writings – no immediately visible similarity of structure, theme, characterization or language – has been found in Elizabethan or Jacobean writers. Those who have found most have had to look deeper, seeking out effects on a sensibility, a world-view.

What is remarkable about Bruno's dialogues is their discursive freedom and agility. He can move instantaneously, for instance, in *Lo Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante*, from Sofia as Earthly Wisdom to the pagan deities headed by the mighty thunderer *altitonante* Jupiter to the rustics of Nola round to personifications like Fortune or Wealth and Poverty and back round again. The intricate play of shifting perspectives is highlighted in the work's full title: *Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante proposto da Giove, effettuato dal conseglio, revelato da Mercurio, recitato da Sofia, udito da Saulino, registrato dal Nolano.* In the parodistic *Cabala del Cavallo Pegaseo con l'aggiunta dell'Asino Cillenico*, Bruno apes dedicatory epistles, Dominican sermons and neo-Aristotelian sophistry and syllogism-mongering to prove the superiority of asinine wisdom over any other, then introduces Onorio as one who recollects having transmigrated both from an ass and from Aristotle, and has a third dialogue which doesn't take place as the interlocutors don't turn up, so that the work ends with an appendix involving an argument between an Ass and a Pythagorean who wants to deny him access to the Pythagorean academy, only to be overruled by Mercury as *deus-ex-machina.* Bruno's other dialogues are likewise far from conventional in form as well as content, and well merit the label of 'phantasticall toyes' which they received in 1585 from the unidentified 'N.W.' in his preface to Samuel Daniel's translation of Paolo Giovio's *Imprese.*[47]

How does all this impact on the Elizabethan literary scene? Large claims have been made for Bruno, both by an English specialist and comparatist, Peter Lloyd, and by a Bruno specialist and comparatist, Hilary Gatti, the publication of whose books coincided in 1989.[48] Their titles speak boldly for themselves: Lloyd's – *Perspectives and Identities: The Elizabethan Writer's Search to Know his World*; and Gatti's – *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge: Giordano Bruno in England.* Lloyd's

47 See Aquilecchia, 'G.B. in Inghilterra,' 28f. See also footnote 2 above.
48 See footnotes 17 and 29 above.

broader focus places Bruno firmly at the centre of the intellectual upheaval and de-centring of thought and identity in English culture of the late sixteenth century. Gatti's work is focussed on Bruno himself as a figure who combined within his writings all forms of knowledge.[49] She pursues material evidence, precise correspondences and verbal echoes of Bruno's ideas and writings in late Elizabethan and early Stuart culture. The ground covered is extensive and impressive, and the sites in which Brunoesque traces have been found include: Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*;[50] Shakespeare's *Hamlet*;[51] Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, and his circle, particularly Thomas Harriot;[52] Carew's court masque for James I, *Coelum Britannicum*;[53] and the dedication to the same monarch of Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*.[54] Precise textual correspondences are situated within larger and commanding perspectives and as we have seen above have been augmented by Sacerdoti's studies of a Brunoesque presence or dimension in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and especially *Antony and Cleopatra* and in Raleigh's *History*. Gatti's 'Preface' declares that 'the study of Bruno in late Elizabethan England had led me to isolate a crisis of knowledge which was not limited to the new science;' she sees in 'early Elizabethan tragedies [...] the emergence in tragic terms of a new intellectual hero.'[55] In her opening chapter she goes on to talk of an 'increasing sense of crisis which was beginning to invest the concept of monarchy itself' and comments that 'Elizabethan dramatists [...] by the very fact of dramatizing the history of Princes in problematical terms, have been seen as partially subverting their sacred and inviolable authority' (though she sees Bruno himself as not directly involved in questioning kingship).[56]

Gatti does not mention the crisis in the institution of monarchy that came with the judicial execution in 1587 of one crowned queen, Mary of Scotland, who herself had strong claims to the English crown,

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49 Gatti, *Renaissance Drama of Knowledge*, 11.
50 *Ibid.*, 74-113, 165ff.
51 *Ibid.*, 114-164.
52 *Ibid.*, 35-73.
53 *Ibid.*, 17.
54 *Ibid.*, 20f.
55 *Ibid.*, xiii.
56 *Ibid.*, 15ff.

by another crowned queen, Elizabeth of England. Mary's execution, and the sequel of 1588, must certainly have contributed to the crisis and transformation in consciousness which becomes so visible in the following years, as well as to subverting the sacred and inviolable authority of monarchs, and of the religions they variously professed. The concomitance of Mary Stuart and Giordano Bruno is not accidental. For Bruno's rejection of Christianity, and his reaching out towards divinity in the universe and in nature, had very much to do with the hideous and bloody excesses which the sectarian divisions of west European Christianity had engendered.

I would therefore take Gatti's proposition a long way further, and suggest that the challenge posed by Bruno, a challenge which could be derided, suppressed and driven underground but not ignored, was not limited to problematizing monarchy, and in fact not primarily aimed in that direction. Bruno's challenge was far more all-embracing. In Donne's words, it threw all in doubt.[57] What Bruno had to say could barely be entertained; he thought the unthinkable. But once said, once thought, and said and thought so vigorously, it could not be unsaid, unthought. It helped to redirect English culture in a this-worldly direction. Bruno wrote only one play. Yet it was drama that took off most spectacularly in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. So where and how does Bruno come into it?

It is hard to isolate the Brunian catalyst in this, and clearly many large factors other than the impact of Bruno are involved. But if we accept that Bruno had made every *presa di posizione* problematical and dangerous, if we accept that he had relativized every discourse, we can suggest certain connections. For what literary form makes it harder to identify an authorial stance than mimetic drama, in which every character has to be allowed his or her autonomy, no character speaks for the dramatist, and the free play of irony is unfettered? What better medium is there for opening up every possible issue without pinning oneself to a fixed viewpoint? What writer is more inscrutable than Shakespeare? Can Marlowe's beliefs be read off from his plays?

When Bruno came to London, the morality plays were still on their last legs (and Bruno's *Spaccio* indeed reads in part like a

57 Note 8 above.

deconstruction of the morality genre). While Bruno's drift is consistently towards the inseparability of spirit and matter, towards the creatural, the here-and-now, the flesh-and-blood human being, his framework is rigorously historical and transhistorical. That of the English dramatists is always commandingly located in a this-worldly reality and related to an inescapable now, has a local habitation and a name. No doubt the connection between Bruno's writings and the great drama of the English baroque can never be proved in terms of cause and effect, just as, when Bruno launched his post-Copernican cosmology in *La cena delle ceneri* in 1584, he could never have predicted that the telescope would so soon be invented to prove him right. But I find very intriguing indeed the coincidence between Bruno's meteoric passage across the Elizabethan firmament in 1583-1585 and the brilliant star-burst of English theatre which lit up the sky from a few years later.

La Trobe University

Sir Philip Sidney 'inward Sunne to Heroicke minde' and Giordano Bruno's 'sole intelligenziale' in *De Gli Eroici Furori*

Daniel Massa

Some time in 1582, Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil* discovers a painful truth. While he weighs his thoughts in 'sense's balance,' he cannot, nor indeed does he, desire to see the skies 'which inwarde sunne to Heroicke minde displaies.'[1] Seeing his beloved Stella in flesh and blood, neglecting the *inward sunne*, Astrophil gestures towards physicality:

> Vertue's great beautie in that face I prove
> And find th'effect, for I do burne in love.[2]

In 1585 in *De Gli Eroici Furori*, Giordano Bruno transmutes the burning erotic love and reaches out for the '*inward sunne – al sole intelligenziale*':

> Ma è un calore acceso dal *sole intelligenziale* ne l'anima e impeto divino che gl' impronta l'ali: onde più e più avvicinandosi al *sole intelligenziale*, rigettando la ruggine de le umane cure, dovien un oro probato e puro, ha sentimento della divina ed interna armonia, concordia gli suoi pensieri e gesti con la simmetria della legge insita in tutte cose.[3]

Bruno crossed over from France to England in 1583./ During his two-year stay in the French Embassy, he published cosmological and moral works which, as Corbinelli stated, 'left great schisms in the Schools.'[4] Even before his arrival, Bruno was being mentioned in Cobham's secret correspondence to Sir Francis Walsingham, Philip Sidney's father-in-law:

> Il signor Doctor Jordano Bruno, Nolano, a professor in philosophy, intends to pass into England, whose religion I cannot commend.[5]

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1 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 25 in *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* W. A. Ringler (ed.) (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1962), 165-237.

2 *Ibid.*

3 G. Aquilecchia (ed.) Giordano Bruno: *Dialoghi italiani* (3rd. ed.) (Florence. Sansoni, 1957), 987-89.

4 G. Aquilecchia, *Due Dialoghi Sconosciuti e Due Dialoghi Noti* (Rome, 1957), xii.

5 *Public Record Office, State Papers*, 79. Vol.9. f.68. Henry Cobham to Francis Walsingham, 28 March 1583.

In the 1580s, a love-hate relationship existed between the English and French courts. The possibility of Elizabeth I marrying Henri III's younger brother, Alençon was still in the air and highly suspect. The French Embassy in Butcher Row was a centre for dissent. Michel Castelnau, Marquis de Mauvissière, was walking a political tightrope, trying to aid the great treason while ostensibly pursuing a policy of conciliation with Elizabeth.[6] Walsingham kept the Embassy under constant supervision which reached its peak when Bruno arrived in England, just when the Throgmorton plot was discovered.[7]

Soon after his arrival in England, Bruno accompanied Sidney and Alberto Laski, Polish Palatine of Siradia, to Oxford University. In Bruno's *La Cena de le Ceneri*, Frulla gives a graphic account of the debate which took place on 13th June 1583:

> These are the fruits of England: search as much as you will, you will only find doctors in grammar [...] a constellation of pedantic and intransigent ignorance and presumption [...] go to Oxford and let them recount what happened to the Nolan, when he disputed publicly in theology in the presence of the Polish Prince Alasco and others of the English nobility. Let them tell you how well he could refute their arguments and how the poor doctor, put forward as the leader of the academy on that solemn occasion, was as puzzled as a chick in straw, stopping fifteen times over fifteen syllogisms. Hear how they stopped his public lectures, as well as those on the immortality of the soul and on the quintuple sphere.[8]

George Abbot, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford intermittently from 1600 to 1605, and later Archbishop of Canterbury, provides a different perspective:

> When that Italian Didapper, [...] intituled himselfe, Philoteus Iordanus Brunus Nolanus, Magis elaborate Theologiae Doctor (Praefat in explicatio triginta sigillorum) &c. with a name longer than his body, had in the traine of Alasco the Polish Duke, seene our University in the years 1583 his hart was on fire, to make himselfe by some worthy exploite, to become famous in that celebrious place. Not long after returning againe, when he had more boldly then wisely, got up into the highest place of our best & most renowed schoole, stripping up his sleeves like some Iugler,

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6 *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, 1583 and Addenda*, 292. Henri Fagot to Francis Walsingham, 2 May 1583.

7 *Calendar of State Papers,1583*, XII. 61. Egerton MSS. 2074.f.72.

8 'La Cena de le Ceneri' in *Opere di Giordano Bruno* A. Wagner (ed.) (Leipzig,1830) I, 146. All references to Bruno's Italian works are taken from this edition.

> and telling us much of Chentrum & chirculus & chircumferenchia (after the pronunciation of his Country language) he undertooke among very many other matters to set on foote the opinion of Copernicus, that the earth did goe round, and the heavens did stand still; whereas in truth it was his owne head which rather did run round, and his braines did not stand still. When he had read his first Lecture, a grave man, & both then and now of good place in that University, seemed to himselfe, somewhere to have read those things which the Doctour propounded; but silencing his conceit till he heard him the second time, remembered himselfe then, and repayring to his Study, found both the former and later Lecture. Taken almost verbatim out of the workes of Marsilius Ficinus (*De Vita coelitus coparanda).* Wherewith when he had acquainted that rare & excellent Ornament of our land, the Reverend Bishop of Durham that now is, but then Deane of Christs-Church, it was at the first thought fit, to notifie to the Illustrious Reader, so much as they had discovered. But afterwards hee who gave the first light, did most wisely intreate, that once more they might make trial of him if he persevered to abuse himselfe, and that Auditory the thirde time, they should then do their pleasure. After which, Iordanus continuing to be ide Iordanus, they caused some to make knowne unto him their former patience, & the paines which he had taken with them, and so with great honesty of the little mas [*sic*] part, there was an end of that matter.[9]

Gabriel Harvey maintained that in the Laski debate Bruno's main adversary was Dr. John Underhill. He also reports that Bruno subjected the Aristotelian philosophy to severe strictures, and that he argued strongly and effectively against all comers.[10] Walsingham was closely connected to Underhill, then chaplain-in-ordinary to the Queen, later elected to the Bishopric of Oxford precisely on Walsingham's recommendation. The question arises: Could Walsingham (with Cobham's warning in mind) have planted such a formidable debater[11] as Underhill (or John Rainolds) to counter Bruno's arguments and discredit his philosophy?

The hypothesis is attractive, but practically impossible to prove unless other evidence is unearthed. Bruno later went out of his way to cultivate a friendship with Sidney and Leicester, as well as to praise Walsingham's 'culture and courtesy.'[12] Walsingham would have

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9 *The Reasons which Docteur Hill hath Brought, for the Upholding of Papistry, which is falselie termed the Catholike Religion* (Oxford, 1604), 88f. *cfr.* Robert McNulty, 'Bruno at Oxford,' *Renaissance News,* 13 (1960), 300-305.

10 G. C. Moore Smith (ed.) *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia* (Oxford, 1913), 156.

11 *Dictionary of National Biography,* XX, 30f.

12 'La Cena de le Ceneri,' I, 145.

encouraged Sidney to maintain a link with the French Embassy. For more than two years, Bruno lived in Mauvissière's embassy. He was well placed to elicit information for or against the French. The unrestrained impetuous orator, Mauvissière's 'gentleman,' could be a very valuable French contact. Mauvissière himself wrote of Sidney trying to acquire information.[13]

One circumstance that connects Bruno, albeit indirectly, with shady activities is his friendship with Alexander Dickson. Bruno had met Dickson in Paris where the latter had been studying, probably as the Queen of Scots' scholar.[14] When Bruno went to England, Dickson consolidated their friendship by publishing *De Umbra Rationis*, patterned on Bruno's *De Umbris Idearum*, aimed at popularizing Bruno's memory system in England.

Robert Bowes, Treasurer of Berwick and resident English Ambassador to Scotland, wrote that 'Dickson, master in the art of memory and sometime attending on Mr. Philip Sidney,' was employed in passing information and intelligence from Scotland to Europe 'in the businesse of the papists.'[15] Not unnaturally, Bruno was on the best of terms with 'Dicsono Arelius'[16] who appears as the abettor of Nolan philosophy in *De La Causa*, the 'so faithful friend [...] whom the Nolan loves as his own eyes.'[17]

In a letter to Bowes, Dickson denied he was 'acquent with strangers and ambassadors' for the purpose of spying.[18] Dudley, Sidney and Walsingham knew of Mauvissière's involvement, and it was almost inconceivable that no suspicion rubbed off onto Bruno. In his 'proem' to *De La Causa*, published when Mauvissière was 'intermeddling to convey secret letters to the Queen of Scots,' and when Walsingham was urging Henri III to recall Mauvissière to Paris,[19] Bruno suggests he was suspected

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13 *Papiers d'Etat Relatifs à l'Histoire de l'Ecosse, Teulet Papers*, III. Mauvissière to Henri III of France, 28 July 1584, 672; 691.

14 J. Durkan, 'Alexander Dickson and S. T. C. 6823,' *The Bibliotheck*, Vol. 3.5 (1962), 183.

15 *Ibid.*, 183-190.

16 A native of Errol.

17 *Opere*, 'De La Causa,' I, 227.

18 *Calendar of Scottish Papers*, XI, 674.

19 *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, 1583-4*, 436. Walsingham to Stafford, 27 March 1584.

of spying. Bruno knew he was suspected, and his surreptitious journeys to Paris and Scotland did not help allay such suspicions.

Bruno's connection with Sidney may help throw light on the changing climate of opinion inside the French Embassy. Bruno claimed to have discovered Sidney's merits as soon as he reached England in 1583, but there is no evidence for Sidney's 'patronage' before 1585, at the time when some of the suspicion seems to have lifted off Mauvissière. Sidney became a relatively frequent visitor to the French Embassy, especially towards late 1584 when his father-in-law, Walsingham, would have informed him that Mauvissière 'hath now left his wonted secret dealings with the Queen of Scots and frameth himself to become more acceptable to her Majesty.'[20]

Bruno's attitude to French foreign policy underwent a change exactly around this time. In the 'proem' to *La Cena de le Ceneri* published in 1584, Bruno had emphasized the warrior figure of Henri III at whose power 'the very pivots of the world resound,' whose anger 'startles and frightens other potent predators.'[21] In contrast to this, in *Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante* a peaceful Henri is presented. He becomes a 'just, Christian, saintly, religious' king who disdains earthly conquest:

> Then why are you, O rulers suspicious and fearful of him who has no intention of Taming your forces, who has never harboured intentions against your crowns?[22]

Sidney's friendship with Bruno strengthened just at this time. Whereas the first four Italian books printed in England were dedicated to Mauvissière, there appears a gradual shift from French dependency in 1584. Both *Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante* and *De Gli Eroici Furori* are dedicated to Sidney and seem an attempt to counter 'the vile arsenic' of suspicion by political conciliation.[23]

Together with a small circle of sympathizers, Bruno is said to have discussed delicate philosophical and political matters:

> In the court of Queen Elizabeth 'tis generally acknowledged, even by her enemies, that there was a set of very extraordinary men, and among them some, who understood everything else as well as

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20 *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, 1584-5,* 174. Walsingham to Stafford, 3 December 1584.

21 *Opere,* I, 122.

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Opere,* 'Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante,' II, 107.

> the Art of Government, and who saw further than any since (or perhaps before) into the mysteries of Priestcraft, and the extravagance of Superstition [...] the most remarkable instance of their liberty in thinking, and of their prudence in concealing their notions is this book (Bruno's *Spaccio de la Bestia Tronfante*) which was written with the privity of a certain number among them, who had the few copies that were printed, and the work was particularly dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney [...] the rest being a mixture of young and old persons, as Sir Christopher Hatton, Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Ambrose Philips, the Earl of Leicester [...] in the Book is represented a Council of the Gods, owning, rehearsing, and Exposing their ancient worship.[24]

It is certain that Bruno's Italian and Latin works exerted considerable influence on late sixteenth and early seventeenth century English writers, scientists and philosophers such as Thomas Hariot, William Lower, and Nicholas Hill whose *Philosophia Epicurea* adopts *verbatim* from *De Immenso* and *De Monade* many of Bruno's ideas relevant to the infinity of space and worlds and to the concept of the *minima*.[25]

The question has often arisen as to whether Bruno's Italian works had any influence on such men as Sir Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville. It is maintained that Sidney and Fulke Greville were among Bruno's intimate friends, that he was well received at court and Queen Elizabeth herself read and treasured his book.[26]

Critics like Yates, Symonds, Siebeck and Cook[27] suggested that Sidney was influenced by the forthright views and originality of Bruno's

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24 *The Miscellaneous Works of John Toland* (1747), 376-378. Toland to Leibniz.

25 See Daniel Massa, 'Giordano Bruno's Ideas in Seventeenth Century England,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 38.2 (1977), 227-243. *cfr.* H. Gatti, 'Minimum and Maximum, Finite and Infinite – Bruno and the Northumberland Circle,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* Vol. 48 (1985), 144-163.

26 Thomas Zouch, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Sir Philip Sidney* (York, 1808), 338. n.5. Ch Julius Caesaris la Galla, *De Phaenomenis in Orbe Lunae* quoted in *Opere di Galileo Galilei* A. Favaro (ed.) (Florence, 1929-39), III, 352 where it is said Queen Elizabeth described Bruno as 'faithless, impious and godless.'

27 F. A.Yates, 'The Emblematic Conceit in Giordano Bruno's *De Gli Eroici Furori* and in the Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* VI (1943), 102-121. Henceforth cited as *Emblematic Conceits.* J. A. Symonds, 'Sir Philip Sidney,' *English Men of Letters* J. Morley (ed.) (London, 1886), III, 170f. B. Siebeck, *Das Bild Sir Philip Sidney in Der Englischen Renaissance* (Weimar,1939), 58-62. A. S. Cook, *Sidney's Defence of Poesy* (Boston, 1890).

moral and cosmological works. Frances Yates suggested that, at the instigation of Henri III, Bruno went on a 'secret mission' to England to infiltrate the upper ranks of the nobility and with them work out a policy of reconciliation of Catholic and Protestant religions. Working with Du Perron, who sought the re-establishment of Catholicism in England, Bruno could bring about such a *rapprochement* by preaching the 'Politique' principle of toleration through 'philosophical mollification.'[28] A. S.Cook writes:

> Even more conducive to the philosophical meditation which the authorship of this *tractate* ('A Defence of Poesy') required may have been Sidney's friendship with a famous philosopher and highly gifted nature (Bruno), who in that year came to England and entered the circle composed of Sidney and his intimate friends.[29]

I shall argue that it was Sidney who influenced Bruno, and not the other way round.

In *De La Cena*, Bruno speaks of the cultured and virtuous Sidney:

> who was well known to me, first by reputation when I was in Milan and France, and now since I have been in this country, through having met him in the flesh.[30]

Among the forty-two dedications addressed to Sidney, two are by Bruno, and Bruno is one of two writers who addressed Sidney specifically as a poet during his lifetime.[31] A careful study of Sidney's works does not unearth the similarities to Bruno that we might have been led to believe. There is no reference to infinity or to plurality of worlds, and only indirectly do we hear of other worlds being inhabited:

> With how sad steps, o Moone, thou climbst the skies [...]
> What, may it be that even in heav'nly place
> That busie archer his sharpe arrowes tries? [...]
> Then even of fellowship, o Moone, tell me
> Is constant Love deem'd there but want of wit?
> Are Beauties there as proud as here they be?[32]

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28 'The Religious Policy of Giordano Bruno,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 3 (1940), 181-208. *Idem., The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1947), 227-229.

29 Cook, xiii.

30 F. A.Yates, (trans.) *The Art of Memory* (1969), 302.

31 The other was Scipio Gentile, *Davidis Psalmos Epicae Paraphrasis* (1584). See Ringler, lxi.

32 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 31. *cfr. Opere,* 'De Gli Eroici Furori,' II, 364: 'Luna incostante.'

This is not surprising since most of Sidney's sonnets ante-date Bruno's most original work on cosmology and were written at least a year before Bruno's arrival in England.[33]

Frances Yates pointed out that it is characteristic of Bruno that he links emblem and metaphor with his philosophy, where macro and microcosm are closely linked and patterned, so that the whole universe may be read as a hieroglyph under which truth is ready to be decrypted. Through a careful study of emblems, Yates traces a close connection between *Astrophel and Stella* and *Eroici Furori*, concluding that Bruno not only influenced Sidney, but that the *Eroici Furori* is

> thus seen to be a work of the greatest importance to students of Elizabethan poetry. Through its connections with Sidney it forms a link between that poetry and some of the deepest currents of contemporary thought and feeling.[34]

It is here argued that Sidney himself influenced Bruno to a significant extent, and that *Spaccio* and *Eroici* show Bruno competing for Sidney's favour.[35] *Eroici,* published in 1585, was one of the last books dedicated to Sidney while he was alive, and post-dates the writing of Sidney's sonnet-sequence to Stella, which was published posthumously in 1591, five years after Sidney's death at Zutphen. Though Sidney was still writing sonnets in 1583-85, most of his original poems were written by 1582, before Bruno's arrival in England, and would not have been influenced by anything Bruno had written till then.[36]

Each of *Eroici Furori*'s two sections contains five dialogues in which 'Nolano's' sonnets on the heroic lover's pursuit of divine love are explicated in such a manner that the emblematic imagery reflects the 'profonda contemplazione'[37] that will make the reader aware of the hidden divine principle within him:

> Il mio primo e principale, mezzano ed accessorio, ultimo e finale intento in questa Tessitura fu ed è d'apportare contemplazione divina, e metter avanti a gli occhi ed Orecchie altrui furori non da volgari, ma eroici amori.[38]

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33 Ringler, xlii-xliv.
34 Yates, *Emblematic Conceits*, 121.
35 *cfr.* Yates, *The Art of Memory,* 275.
36 Ringler, 440.
37 *Opere,* I, 306.
38 *Dialoghi italiani,* 936.

Ringler and Howell, McCoy and Kalstone show that whereas many took Petrarch as their model, Sidney refused to adore his mistress in Petrarchan fashion. A study of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* and Bruno's *Eroici Furori* shows Bruno taking a leaf out of Sidney's love notebook and adapting it to suit his purpose. Sonnet 5 in *Astrophel and Stella* reads:

> It is most true, that eyes are form'd to serve
> The *inward light*: and that the heavenly part
> Ought to be king [...]
> True, that true Beautie Vertue is indeed,
> Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,
> Which elements with mortall mixture breed:
> True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
> And should in soule up to our countrey move:
> True, and yet true that I must Stella love.[39]

As the sonnet-sequence progresses,Sidney's attempt to love his woman physically comes to the fore, with poetry of the type approved by Bruno:

> Let Vertue have that Stella's selfe; yet thus
> That Vertue but *that body* graunt to us.[40]

More vulgar and bawdy then:

> But lo, while I do speake, it *groweth noone with me,* [...][41]
> My heart cries 'ah,' it burnes, mine eyes now dazled be:
> No wind, no shade can coole, what helpe then in my case,
> But with short breath, long lookes, staid feet and *walking head,*
> Pray that my sunne go downe with meeker beames to bed.[42]

The 'vertuous course' is conveniently abandoned, and Astrophil is soon found using erotic 'cherry' symbolism that aids physical seduction.

> Most sweet-faire, most faire-sweet, do not alas,
> From coming neare those Cherries banish me:
> For though full of desire, emptie of wit,
> Admitted late by your best-graced grace,
> I caught at one of them a hungrie bit.[43]

In *De Gli Eroici Furori*, Bruno is aware of Sidney's anti-Petrarchanism as well as of his love for Penelope Devereux. Recalling

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39 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 5.

40 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 52. *cfr. Opere,* 'Eroici,' II, 300.

41 *cfr. Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio's: 'the bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the prick of noone.'

42 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 76.

43 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 82.

the Ulysses-Penelope myth in *Eroici*, Bruno plays with metaphors in the same way that Sidney plays with words[44] to discover the identity of his beloved, Lady Penelope Rich:

> The principal lesson that love teaches is that one *contemplates in shadow the divine beauty*, when he cannot do so in a mirror; and like the suitors of *Penelope* amuses oneself with the maid-servants when one is not allowed to converse with the mistress.[45]

Bruno agrees that physical attraction ought to be recognized. At the end of 'Argomento del Nolano' in *Eroici*, Bruno's misogynistic palinode exempts ladies who were associated with Sidney. Bruno sets aside the pride, arrogance, envy, falsity, libidousness, avarice and ingratitude 'borrowed from Pandora's box'[46] and sings the praises of the virtuous ladies of England, showering them with Petrarchan praise and, like Sidney, addressing them as nymphs and goddesses.[47]

Queen Elizabeth herself appears as a sun among stars as she had done in *The Fortress of Perfect Beauty*, possibly partially written by Sidney.[48] Bruno's reference to 'Quell' unica Diana' whom he does not in *Eroici* wish to name, is sufficiently ambiguous, however, to be referring not merely to Queen Elizabeth but also to Penelope Devereux. 'Comprendasi dunque il geno ordinario![49] Thus, the ladies, with a possible reference to Stella of Sidney's sonnets, are described as stars: 'E siete in terra quel ch'in ciel le stelle.'[50] This is confirmed in Florio's dedication

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44 See for example 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 24:
'Rich fools there be, whose base and filthy heart' (l.1)
'But that rich foole, who by blind fortune's lot' (l.9)
' [...] in only follie rich' (l.14)
Sonnet 35: 'Doth even grow rich, naming my Stella's name' (l.11)
Sonnet 37: 'Hath no misfortune, but that Rich she is.' (l.14)

45 'Eroici,' II, 331.

46 *Ibid.*, 299. *cfr.* 'Astrophel and Stella,' 5th Song: 'I say thou art a Devill, though clothd in Angel's shining.' *cfr.* 'Certain Sonnets,' Ringler, 135-162: 'ungratefull fancie' and 'femall franzie,' CS 30.

47 *Ibid.*, II, 312. *cfr.* 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 37: 'Towards Aurora's court a Nymph doth dwell.' *cfr.* Sonnet 82: 'Nymph of the gard'n, where all beauties be.'

48 'Eroici,' II, 312. *cfr.* 'The Fortress of Perfect Beauty,' J. Nicholls (ed.) *Queen Elizabeth's Progresses and Public Processions* (1788), II, 134. E. G. Fogel, 'A Possible Addition to the Sidney Canon,' *MLN*, LXXV (1960), 389-394, marshalls impressive evidence that Sidney wrote part of the pageant. N. Council, 'The Fortress of Perfect Beauty,' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 39 (1976), 336.

49 'Eroici,' II , 303.

50 *Ibid.*

of his translation of Montaigne's *Essays* (1603) where, addressing Lady Rich and Sidney's daughter, the Countess of Rutland, he makes a direct reference to Bruno's 'Apology':

> Or as my fellow Nolano in his heroycall furies wrote (noble Countesse) to your most heroicke Father, in a Sonnet to you Ladies of England,You are not women, but in their likenesse Nymphs, Goddesses and of Celestiall substance, Et siete in terra quel ch'in ciel le stelle.[51]

In a book dedicated to Philip Sidney, whose Astrophil[52] is sometimes a lover of celestial substances and whose Stella is 'the onely Planet of my light,'[53] Bruno could thus refer indirectly to Sidney's sonnets circulating in manuscript.

In *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnets 72, and 97 as well as in the 5th Song, Sidney refers to Stella as Diana, while in *Certain Sonnets*, 31, the lover's search leads ultimately to the beauty of Diana. Sidney's reference to Penelope Devereux as Diana is well attested by his friends and contemporaries.[54] Henry Constable dedicated his *Diana* (1592) to Lady Penelope Rich, and Samuel Daniel in Newman's 1591 edition of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* evokes Diana as the inspiring influence on the poet.[55] It is through her again that man can rise to the beatific vision, for the earthly Stella is symbolic of another heavenly *stella*, the 'inward sunne' of the 'Heroicke minde.'[56]

> Vertue of late, with vertuous care to ster
> Love of her selfe, takes Stella's shape, that she
> To mortall eyes might sweetly shine in her.[57]

In *Eroici Furori* Bruno refers to Diana as the 'goddess [...] of contemplation and truth, that is the Diana, who constitutes harmony in second intelligence, who receives splendour from the first to communicate

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51 *Emblematic Conceits*, 111.

52 M. Wilson (ed.) *Astrophel and Stella*, 'Astrophel is meaningless in itself, and useless as a disguise for Stella's lover [...] but the "Astrophel" habit has won the day, and readers who share my annoyance at the slur on Sidney's scholarship must substitute "Astrophil" for themselves,' xvi-xvii.

53 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 68.

54 *The Phoenix Nest* (1593), 1. See *Huntingdon Library Bulletin*, 7 (1935), 98-100.

55 S. Lee (ed.) *Elizabethan Sonnets* (1904), I, 95.

56 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 25.

57 *Ibid.*

it to others.[58] Earlier still, Bruno seemed to equate Stella and Diana, significantly in the Diana-Actaeon sequence where he explains how the soul can rise to, and fall from, heavenly things. Here the second intelligences are compared to a ray of light:

> il quale quindi tocca la terra, et e gionto a cose inferiori et oscuri, che illustra, vivifica et accende, indi e gionto a *l'elemento del fuoco, cioe a la Stella*, da cui procede, ha principio, e diffuso, et in *cui ha propria et originale sussistenza*.[59]

Later in the fourth dialogue, Bruno makes the same point perhaps even more strongly:

> *Questa è la Diana*, quello uno, ch'è l'istesso ente, quello Ente, ch'è la natura comprensibile, in cui influisce il Sole et il splendor de la natura superiore [...] *onde il Furioso* si vanta d'esser preda de la Diana, a cui si rese, per cui si stima gradito consorte, e più felice, cattivo e suggiogato, che invidiar possa ad altro uomo.[60]

This recalls the mood of several of Sidney's sonnets towards the end of the sequence when, though still subjugated, Astrophil's hope of re-possessing his Stella has vanished.[61] Sidney boastfully confirms the rumours that link his name to Stella's:

> If I but stars upon mine armour beare [...] ,[62]
> Your morall notes straight my *hid meaning* teare
> From out my ribs, and puffing prove that I
> Do Stella love. Fooles, who doth it deny?[63]

Sidney's Sonnet 103, seems to provide ideas and images for the close of *Eroici Furori*. Sidney sees Stella gliding on a boat in the Thames, the personified river, happy because Stella's eyes, 'those fair planets,' shone on his face. Struck by her beauty, Astrophel exclaims that Stella, elsewhere 'the only planet of my light,' should be translated to the 'highest place':

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58 'Eroici,' II, 394.

59 *Ibid.*, II, 349.

60 *Ibid.*, II, 408f.

61 *cfr.* 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 28:

> 'The raines of Love I love, though never slake,
> And joy therein, though Nations count it shame.'

62 Ringler, 490, confirms that Thomas Lant pictured Sidney's armour with stars upon it in engravings which he made of Sidney's funeral procession.

63 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 104.

O happie Tems, that didst my Stella beare,
I saw thy selfe with many a smiling line
Upon thy cheerful face, joye's livery weare:
While those fair planets on thy streames did shine.
The bote for joy could not to daunce forbeare,
While wanton winds *with beauties so divine*
Ravisht, staid not, till in her golden haire
They did themselves (o sweetest prison) twine [...]
She so discheveld, blusht; from window I
With sight thereof cried out; o faire disgrace,
Let honor's selfe to thee graunt highest place.[64]

In the fifth dialogue of *Eroici Furori*, Bruno writes that the suffering of the lover can change to wonderful happiness if he can see the 'two most beautiful stars' in the world. He returns to the Stella theme, saying that only she can effect the cure that will lead the lover to experience divinity:

Allor se avvien, ch' aspergan le man belle
chiunque a lor per rimedio s'avvicina,
Provar potrete la virtù divina,
Ch'a mirabil contento
Cangiando il rio tormento,
Vedrete due più vaghe al mondo stelle.[65]

This is repeated in the final *Canzone de gl'Illuminati*, where Oceanus, symbolizing natural good, vies with Jupiter, symbolizing suprarational truth. Oceanus boasts of the beauty and goodness of this 'unique nymph' of the Thames, here assuredly also Queen Elizabeth, so marvellously beautiful that 'not even the sun shines so among stars':

Et io comprendo nel mio vasto seno
Tra gli altri quell paeso, ove il felice
Tamesi veder lice,
Oh' ha di più vaghe ninfe il coro ameon,
Tra quelle ottegno, tal fra tutte belle,
Per far del mar più che del ciel amante
Te, Giove altitonante,
Cui tanto il sol non splende tra le stelle. [66]

Jupiter's reply to Oceanus's boast is that since no one can be allowed to be more blessed than he, the laws of change require that this Thames nymph and the sun change places, so that she is translated into the heavens as a sun among stars:

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64 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 103.
65 'Eroici,' II, 432.
66 *Ibid.*, II, 436.

Vaglia il sol tra tue ninfe per costei,
E per vigor di leggi sepiterne
De le dimore alterne
Costei vaglia per sol tra gli astri miei.[67]

Bruno thus sublimates earthly love, ending with the same allusions to Stella that he had used at the start of *Eroici Furori* – ambivalent in that as in much mediaeval and Renaissance allegory, one symbol or image could have multiple significance. Bruno protects his dual significance by explicitly refusing to name 'quel unica Diana, che in questo numero e proposito non voglio nominare. [...] Comprendasi dunque il geno ordinario!' [68] Bruno's frequent references to Diana and Stella only partly allude to Queen Elizabeth.[69] Bruno, I believe, carefully trimmed his sails. Taking care not to mention Elizabeth I by name, as he had done in *De La Cena*, he contrived a reference to Penelope Devereux which would be clear to Sidney and others in the know.

Sidney himself had transferred attributes previously assigned to the Queen, to his Stella. Whereas in the public pageant 'Perfect Beauty' belonged to the Queen, in the private sonnet-sequence it is Stella's 'face, whose lecture showes what perfect beautie is.'[70] Bruno adopts this subterfuge. Thus, Sidney addresses 'Phenix Stella,'[71] and Bruno intent on heaping hidden meanings elaborates and expands the concepts in two emblem sonnets about 'Unico augel del sol, vaga Fenice.'[72]

Sidney's images of sun-stars-eyes-moon-fire are constantly employed by Bruno in an emblematic framework, often possessing 'hid meaning' and biographical allusions easily understood by the scholar-knight to whom *Eroici Furori* was dedicated. It is significant that in urging Sidney to sublimate the cult of Stella, Bruno points to another heavenly Stella, parodoxically fusing disparate elements inherent in Sidney's metaphor into a unity. On the linguistic level, this attempt at *coincidentia oppositorum* succeeds, but the ambiguity leads to a basic dichotomy. Often

67 *Ibid.*
68 *Ibid.*, II, 303.
69 *cfr.* P. Lefranc, *Sir Walter Raleigh, Ecrivain* (Paris, 1969), 604-608.
70 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 77.
71 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 92 (l.6).
72 'Eroici,' II, 360. *cfr.* II, 383.

Bruno's 'Stella' remains the cruel fair of Sidney's Astrophil[73] 'whose grace is such, that when it chides doth cherish.'[74] Bruno is thus often seen to be describing an earthly inconstant mistress, 'la mia stella' whose cruelty he cherishes:

> E` tale la mia stella,
> Che sempre mi si toglie, e mai si rende,
> Che sempre tanto brucia e tanto splende,
> Sempre tanto crudele e tanto bella,
> Questa mia nobil face
> Sempre si mi martora, e sì mi piace.[75]

Maricondo, however, tells Cesarini in *Eroici* that the heroic mind aspires to the 'inward sunne' not merely through 'guardar a le stelle', but through

> proceeding to the depths of the mind [...] man reaching through simulacra towards the most intimate part of himself, considering that God is near him, with him, and within him.[76]

It is for this reason that Bruno shows a tendentious display of anti-feministic satire. His attack on the English vogue for Petrarch is not essentially different from that of *Astrophel and Stella*, though it is more radical. Sidney had written:

> You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes,
> With new-borne sighes and denisend wit do sing;
> You take wrong waies, those far-fet helpes be such,
> As do bewray a want of inward touch.[77]

Far from attacking Sidney's concept of physical love, Bruno was endorsing it. Could one otherwise visualize a Bruno in search of patronage directly addressing Sidney in the vein he does at the start of his *Eroici Furori*?

> E` cosa veramente, o generosissimo Cavaliero, da basso, bruto, e sporco ingegno d'essersi fatto costantemente studioso, et aver affisso un curioso pensiero circa o sopre la bellezza d'un corpo feminile. Che spettacolo, o dio buono, più vile et ignobile può presentarsi ad un occhio di terso sentimento, che un uomo cogitabundo, afflitto, tormentato, triste, maninconioso, per divenir or freddo, or in mina di mina di perplesso, or in atto di risoluto, un,

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73 *cfr.* 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnets 44; 62; 108.

74 *Ibid.*, First Song, (l.18).

75 'Eroici,' II, 364: 'Luna incostante.' *cfr.* 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnets 44; 65; 76.

76 *Ibid.*, II, 387: 'ma procedendo al profondo de la mente [...] intonar l'orecchie di simulacri [...] venir al più intimo di sè, considerando che dio è vicino, con sè, e dentro dì.' *cfr.* 'Certain Sonnets,' 31: 'Within my selfe to seeke my onelie hire.'

77 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 15.

> che spende il miglior intervallo di tempo e li più scelti frutti di sua vita corrente, destillando l'elixir del cervello con mettere in concetto, scritto e sigillar in publici monumenti quelle continue torture, que' gravi tormenti, que' razionali discorsi, que' faticosi pensieri, e quelli amarissimi studi, destinati sotto la tirannide d'una indegna, imbecille, stolta e sozza sporcaria?[78]

Bruno agreed with Sidney that women must be loved as women, not as goddesses, despite the palinode,[79] which seems to be conscious 'self contradiction.'[80] Borrowing a cue from Sidney,[81] Bruno put forward sexual love as 'quel più dolce pomo che puo produr l'orto del nostro terrestre paradiso.'[82] J. C. Nelson points out that

> the real target of Bruno's apparent diatribe against women is not 'vulgar love' at all – which is justified in several passages – but the refined and studied love celebrated by Petrarch and the countless Petrarchists of Bruno's century.[83]

Bruno knew that Sidney very often addressed his Stella in terms different from those used by other poets for their 'a Dori, a Cintia, a Lesbia, a Corinna, a Laura.'[84]

> O give my passions leave to run their race [...]
> Let folk orecharg'd with braine against me crie.[85]

Sidney lists the reputedly lecherous Edward IV as 'first in praise' because he dared to lose his crown 'rather then faile his love.'[86] A common catalogue of his lady's charms ends rather suggestively:

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78 'Eroici,' II, 99.

79 *Ibid.*, II, 301: 'Voglio dire, che le donne, ben che tal volta non bastino gli onori et ossequi divini, non per ciò se le denno onori et ossequi divini. Voglio, che le donne siano così onorate et amate, come denno essere amate et onorate le donne.'

80 J. C. Nelson, *The Renaissance Theory of Love* (New York,1958), 171.

81 See Fogel, 394. n.13: 'An entry in the catalogue of the sale of Benjamin Heywood Bright's manuscripts at Sotheby's in 1844 reads as follows: 101 Fraunce Abraham: Yeeld, Yeeld, Yeeld O Yeeld: Omnia Vincit Amor. *Venus est Dignissima pomo.* An Original and Unpublished work by this singular writer addressed to Sir Philip Sidney [...].' The discovery of the manuscript purchased by 'Rodd' may afford something close to positive proof relating to Sidney's authorship of the 'Fortress of Perfect Beauty' sonnets.

82 'Eroici,' II, 300.

83 Nelson, 171f.

84 'Eroici,', II, 302.

85 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 64.

86 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 75.

'Yet ah, my Mayd'n Muse doth blush to tell the best.'[87]

Sidney prays 'that my sunne go downe with meeker beames to bed.'[88] Because it would have been justice to cuckold Lord Rich: 'Is it not evill that such a Devill wants hornes?'[89] When indeed Stella promises Astrophil conditional supremacy over her heart if he remained virtuous, he throws aside all principle and concludes:

And though she give but thus conditionly
This realme of blisse, while vertuous course I take,
No kings be crown'd, but they some convenants make.[90]

It is evident that Sidney had no need of Bruno's advice.Towards the end of the sequence, Sidney was prepared to relinquish his pursuit of Stella but says he can never be free from her thrall, and his sequence ends disconsolately:

So strangely (alas) thy works in me prevaile,
That in my woes for thee thou art my joy,
And in my joyes for thee my only annoy.[91]

At this point Sidney will not sublimate his emotion, nor does he move up the *scala* towards a divine object. *Eroici* urges him to sublimate his cult of Stella and to seek within himself the way to the One that Sidney had looked towards in *Certain Sonnets* 31 and 32.

Though the play on words in these two sonnets suggests that they could have been addressed to Lady Rich,[92] the overwhelming evidence is that they antedate the *Astrophel and Stella* sequence, and were written two years before Bruno reached England. *Certain Sonnets* 31 and 32 appear at the end of the Clifford MS transcribed in 1581 which contains the third 'state' of the *Old Arcadia.*[93]

It might be useful to compare these twin sonnets to Bruno's emblematic sonnets in *Eroici Furori.* Published in 1585, Bruno's Actaeon

87 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 77.
88 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 76.
89 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 78.
90 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 69.
91 *Ibid.*, Sonnet 108.
92 'Thou web of will, whose end is never wrought' to signify Penelope, as well as the pun on Penelope Devereux's husband's name: 'Grow rich in that which never taketh rust,' in 'Certain Sonnets,' 31 and 32 respectively.
93 Folger Library MS. 4009.03. *cfr.* Ringler, xlii-xliii.

sequence and its commentary, the allegorical core of *Eroici Furori*, touch on many of the points adopted by Sidney in his 'renunciation' sonnets, the connection being enforced by similar imagery and verbal echoes. In Sidney, the poet is intent on finding beauty and fulfilment through the search for hidden truths:

Thou blind man's marke, thou foole's self chosen snare,
Fond fancie's scum, and dregs of scattered thought,
Band of all evils, cradle of causelesse care,
Thou web of will, whose end is never wrought;

Desire, desire I have too dearly bought,
With price of mangled mind thy worthlesse ware,
Too long, *too long asleepe* thou hast me brought,
Who should my mind to higher things prepare.[94]

In Sidney, the lover is unnamed but the phrasing suggests the Diana-Actaeon myth. In Bruno the lover, Actaeon, lives a life of causeless care,[95] searching for a fading feminine beauty that similarly turns out to represent a band of evils.[96] He becomes his own snare, the hunter turned hunter, because he has lived 'according to the foolish world, sensual, blind and fanciful.'[97] Seemingly driven by fate, his thought is scattered and uncertain:

Il giovan, quand' il destino
Gli drizza il dubbio et incauto cammino.[98]

As he follows enmeshed in his own will, 'l'operazione de l'intelletto' preceding 'l'operazion de la voluntade,'[99] sensual desire extorts the same price as in Sidney. The hounds standing for the lover's thoughts[100] mangle his mind:

Troppo infelice fio mi riportate:
Mi sbranate, e volete, ch'i non viva.[101]

94 'Certain Sonnets,' 31.
95 'Eroici,' II, 299: 'un uomo cogitabundo, afflitto, tormentato, triste, maninconioso, per divenir or freddo, or caldo, or fervente, or tremante.'
96 *Ibid.*: 'instrumenti di morte del vascello di Pandora.'
97 *Ibid.*, 341.
98 *Ibid.*, 339f.
99 *Ibid.*, 339.
100 *Ibid.*, 340.
101 *Ibid.*, 349.

It is then that the lover becomes aware he has been ensnared, caged in female adoration which has rendered him sleepy 'lazy and quiet' and which Bruno, like Sidney, equates with the *sleep of the soul.*[102] Shaking this off, the lover aspires to higher things, 'ad annidarsi alto applicandolo a più alto proposito et intento.'[103] In Sidney, brought to the edge of ruin, the lover sees better:

> For vertue hath this better lesson taught,
> Within my selfe to seeke my onelie hire;
> Desiring nought but how to kill desire.[104]

In Bruno, the road to reform is clear, and again the moral lesson is just as effectively spelt out – the kingdom of God lies within self: 'perchè già avendola contratta in sè, non era necessario di cercare fuor di se la divinità.'[105]

Sidney's *Certain Sonnet* 32 is an amplification of ideas broached in the preceding one:

> Leave me O Love, which reachest but to dust,
> And thou my mind aspire to higher things:
> Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
> What ever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
>
> Draw in thy beames, and humble all thy might,
> To that sweet yoke, where lasting freedomes be:
> Which breakes the clowdes and opens forth the light,
> That doth both shine and give us sight to see.[106]

Bruno's lover separates spirit from matter to achieve a solution 'as the Platonists would have it,'[107] to rise to higher contemplation of the One:

> Quando il mio pondo greve
> Converrà che natura mi disciolga?[108]

and could almost have been translating Sidney when he wrote:

> Lasciami, vita, ch'al mio sol rimonte
> Fatta gemino rio senz' il mio fonte.[109]

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102 *Ibid.*, 341: 'da la gabbia, in cui stava ozioso e quiete.'
103 *Ibid.*
104 'Certain Sonnets,' 31.
105 'Eroici,' II, 340f.
106 'Certain Sonnets,' 32.
107 'Eroici,' II, 349.
108 *Ibid.*
109 *Ibid.*

Sidney's sestet revolves around the theme of *contemptu mundi*. Shedding matter, the soul seeks a reunification with its source:

> O take fast hold, let that light be [my] guide,
> In this small course which birth draws out to death,
> And thinke how evill becommeth him to slide,
> Who seeketh heav'n, and comes of heavenly breath.
> Then farewell world, thy uttermost I see,
> Eternall Love maintaine thy life in me.[110]

The same solution is attempted by Bruno's disillusioned lover. Nothing is left him but the acute sense of his own poverty and misery:

> altro non mi rimane, che il senso de la mia povertà, infelicità e miseria. E per che non son oltre lasciata da questo? *per che non mi soccorre la morte, ora che son priva de la vita?* A che mi trovo le potenze naturali prive de gli atti suoi? Come potrò io sol pascermi di specie intelligibili, come di pane intellettuale, se la sustanza di questo supposito è composta?[111]

Being of 'heavenly breath,' the lover seeks fulfilment in death. There is a sense in which Bruno also accepted this final solution.

> Mio spirto più eh' il suo rivale vale
> S' ove l'eroi non più l'assale sale.[112]

Spirit and matter must be combined in harmony, and the soul 'seeks to recall thought to the care of the body.'[113] This short life[114] which 'birth draws unto death' must also be respected and enjoyed:

> Credete, che non si debba sdegnar la natura di donarvi l'altro bene, se quello che presentamente v'offre tanto stoltamente dispregiare?
> Sdegnarà il ciel dar il secondo bene
> A chi il primiero don caro non tiene.[115]

For matter and spirit, Bruno explains are but one essence 'suggetta a doi termini di contrarietade,'[116] a unity arising out of the coincidence of opposites,[117] so that a valid description of the *scala* for Bruno involves a

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110 'Certain Sonnets,' 32.
111 'Eroici,' II, 347.
112 *Ibid.*, 352.
113 *Ibid.*, 349.
114 *Ibid.*, 340.
115 *Ibid.*, 348.
116 *Ibid.*, 349.
117 *Ibid.*

constant movement, not only upward towards 'L'alto concetto,'[118] but downwards into the matter:

> allora l'anima tutta si converte in dio, et abita il mondo intelligibile, onde per il contrario discende per conversion al mondo sensibile, per via de l'intelletto, ragione, imaginazione, senso, vegetazion.[119]

It is through a cyclical regeneration[120] in which matter and spirit coincide that one can make '*real progress towards that which is really beautiful*,'[121] an eternity '*which has neither margin nor is circumscribed.*'[122] It is love of both matter and spirit that leads towards ultimate perfection. *Contemptu mundi* is forgotten, and a note of exhilaration, probably borrowed from Ficino, is introduced:

> Io per l'altezza de l'oggetto mio
> Da suggetto più vil dovegno un dio.[123]

The rejection of dualism is never completely achieved in Bruno's *Eroici* for matter is always seen to remain 'inferior.' Nevertheless a harmonization of these opposites into one eternal undivided substance is consistently attempted. *Eroici Furori* stubbornly persists in attempting a synthesis out of the disparate positions taken by Sidney for Platonism in *Certain Sonnets* 31 and 32 and against it in *Astrophel and Stella.*

As I see it, Bruno's *Eroici* uses Sidney's sequence on earthly love and adapts it for his heavenly 'Canticle,'[124] using Petrarchan phraseology with a hieroglyphic meaning, something which Sidney denied his poems possessed:

> When I say 'Stella,' I do meane the same
> Princesse of beautie, for whose only sake
> The raines of Love I love, though never slake
> And joy therein, though Nations count it shame.
> I beg no subject to use eloquence,
> Nor in hid wayes to guide Philosophie:
> Looke at my hands for no such quintessence.[125]

118 *Ibid.*, 344.
119 *Ibid.*, 349.
120 *Ibid.*, 348.
121 *Ibid.*, 343.
122 *Ibid.*
123 *Ibid.*, 337. *cfr.* Marsilio Ficino, *Sopra lo Amore* (Florence, 1544), 238: 'innalza l'uomo sopra lo uomo, et in Dio lo converte.'
124 'Eroici,' II, 301.
125 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 28.

Bruno's cast of mind, as shown in his *De Umbris Idearum, Cantus Circaeus* and *Explicatio*, was towards something more esoteric than the accepted commonplaces of Petrarchist allegory, which he attacked.[126] He would reach for the quintessence, in 'hid wayes to guide Philosophie' would make changelings of others' offspring. He claimed none better than Sir Philip Sidney could understand:

> To you therefore I present these, for the Italian will reason with him who understands; my poetry lies under the censure and protection of a poet; my philosophy will make itself clear to your genius.[127]

This shows Bruno very much aware of Sidney's abilities as poet, explicator and critic. Indeed, apart from Scipione Gentile, Bruno is the only other writer to address Sidney specifically as a poet.[128] A study of the traditional stars-eyes equation, recurrent in Sidney and Bruno, shows the latter was paying Sidney the compliment of imitating his imagery.

Thus, Sonnet 42 in *Astrophel and Stella* and Sonnet 47 in *Eroici Furori* are strangely very much alike. Again, in Sidney's Sonnet 48, the dominant image is that of stars and eyes, possessing the double-function of strengthening the lover's vision and contemporaneously impairing it. The earthly lover can in the sight of his beloved visualize love, humility and virtue, wishing ever to remain in the benevolent light. But the stars – eyes also emanate harmful rays causing in each case 'curelesse wounds.' Despite this, the lover in Sidney can still say, as with Petrarch:[129]

> Deare Killer, spare not thy sweet cruell shot:
> A kind of grace it is to slay with speed.[130]

Bruno's poem ends in a similar manner:

> *Del grazioso sguardo apri le porte;*
> *Mirami, o bella, se vuoi darmi morte.*
> Open the portals of your eyes my lady
> And gaze on me if you would slay me.[131]

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126 'Eroici,' II, 302.
127 *Ibid.*, 311. *cfr.* 302.
128 Ringler, lxi.
129 *cfr.* Petrarch's *Rime*, 207: 'Un modo di pietate, occider tosto.' *cfr.* John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV.ii.108: 'it is some mercy when men kill with speed.'
130 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 48. See *The Quarterly Review* (1902), 500.
131 'Eroici,' II, 390.

Bruno's commentary tries to lift this obvious Petrarchan borrowing onto that of the Biblical Canticle. He finds a clue in Sidney's use of 'grace' with its spiritual connotations, and links it with imagery Sidney had used earlier:

> Stella oft sees the very face of woe,
> Painted in my beclouded stormy face.[132]

In the commentary Bruno explains that 'the face in which shines the story of his woes, is the soul as it is exposed to superior grace [...] but God often [...] does not seek to quieten the troubled sky of the human mind by ridding it of shadows and enigmas.'[133] The similarity here is worthy of note.

In Bruno's *Eroici,* however, the person addressed is no longer an earthly mistress but has been transformed into the Deity:

> The lover at last prays that he does not suffer deprivation of the light; because although those looks can *slay* him, they also give him life [...] the supreme joy, which the Cabalists call *mors osculi*, the same which is eternal life that man can glimpse now and possess absolutely in eternity.[134]

What Bruno here seems to be doing is to borrow images traditionally employed by the Petrarchists, and infused with personal emotion by Sidney, and directing them towards the Deity instead of the mistress. In other words, he is merely being original in their application in a different framework, 'in hid wayes to guide Philosophie;' leading the heroic enthusiast towards 'l'alto concetto,' an idea which Sidney, cavalier-fashion, brushed aside at the time he was writing *Astrophel and Stella*:

> Some do I heare of Poet's furie tell,
> But (God wot) wot not what they meane by it.[135]

This was an Astrophil not consciously willing to allow his love to lead ultimately up the Platonic *scala* to be sublimated into a love of God. Bruno found a way out by allegorically manipulating Sidney's own earlier 'adumbrations' of heroic frenzies in *Certain Sonnets* 31 and 32.

Bruno writes of the love towards the One in the same emblems and imagery normally reserved for the mistress. Were it not for the prose

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132 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 45. *cfr.* Sonnet 1: 'to paint the blackest face of woe.'
133 'Eroici,' II, 391.
134 *Ibid.*
135 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 74.

commentary, it would be difficult to distinguish between heavenly love and profane in *Eroici Furori*. Bruno had good reason to believe Sidney might agree with his concept of heroic love. In *Defence of Poesy*, Sidney consolidated what he had already written in the 'renunciation' sonnets of 1581; that the aim of learning and all experience is:

> to know, and by knowledge to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the bodie, to the enjoying of his own divine essence[136]

a suggestion adopted by Bruno in:

> Et io, mercè d'amore
> Mi cangio in dio da cosa inferiore.[137]

If these conclusions are correct, we have Bruno moulding into a new shape some of the ideas and images found in Sidney, just as he had adapted astrological and scientific controversies in Richard Harvey and Digges to clarify his position and infuse originality into his own cosmological system.[138] Sidney then remains an important chain linking Elizabethan to Italian culture, not merely because he was influenced by the works of Petrarch and Bembo, but also because his reactions to either in turn seem to have affected the ethical concepts of Giordano Bruno.

Time and again, Bruno adopts an image from Sidney, exhibiting his inventiveness by expanding it into an emblematic conceit for Sidney to decypher 'per che l'Italiano regioni ragioni con chi l'intende.'[139] Addressing Sidney, 'singolarmente parlo a voi, eccelente Signore,'[140] Bruno claims:

> Through the judicious use of metaphor and under the pretext of allegory, it is possible so to transform any fable, romance, dream or prophetic enigma as to make it mean anything for whoever is prepared to play on sentiment.[141]

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136 *Defence of Poesy*, III.ii.
137 'Eroici,' II, 338.
138 See Daniel Massa, 'Giordano Bruno and the Top-Sail Experiment,' *Annals of Science*, 30 (1973), 201-211.
139 'Eroici,' II, 311.
140 *Ibid.*, 302.
141 *Ibid.*

Eroici Furori's 'sole intelligenziale'underpins just such an exercise in metaphor and allegory at the basis of which lie the sonnets of sentiment of Sidney's Astrophil who:

> While he each thing in sense's balance wayes
> And so nor will, nor can, behold those skies
> Which inwarde sunne to Heroicke minde displaies.[142]

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142 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet 25.

Italian Pride and English Prejudice: The Reception of *Otherness* in the Renaissance

Patricia Ellul-Micallef

> Lascivious metres, to whose venom sound
> The open ear of youth doth always listen;
> Report of fashions in proud Italy,
> Whose manners still our tardy apish nation
> Limps after in base imitation.
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> *Richard II,* Act II Sc. I, ll 19ff

The *weltanschauung* which dominated the Elizabethan world was one largely inherited from the Middle Ages: a still essentially ordered universe in a theocentric world, its cosy equilibrium as yet unassailed by new theories nor too severely eroded by the ongoing secularisation. At the time, England was only just emerging as a nation, a bigger political entity than the small, predominantly despotic city-states of Italy from which it was to draw literary and cultural inspiration. The increasing self-consciousness of this nascent nation and the English character endued with a sense of pride in PolyAlbion has been attributed to being the fruit of the twin impulses of Renaissance and Reformation[1] as England came out of her isolation and began to have more contact with the Continent.

Against this backdrop, the full extent of the significance of the sixteenth century Anglo-Italian encounter and its implications for the development of English culture has yet to be gauged. The genesis of Tudor interest in Italian culture and the infiltration into England of civic humanism has been documented by scholars such as Einstein[2] and Weiss[3] while the role played by travel in the process has been dealt with by Howard,[4] Parks[5] and, more recently, Sara Warneke.[6] However, between

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1 A. L. Rowse, *The England of Elizabeth: The Structure of Society* (London. Macmillan, 1951), 31.

2 L. Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England* (New York. Burt Franklin, 1902).

3 R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century* (2nd ed.) (Oxford. Blackwell, 1957).

4 C. Howard, *English Travellers of the Renaissance* (London, 1914).

5 G. B. Parks, *The English Traveller to Italy, I: The Middle Ages* (to 1525) (Rome. Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1954).

6 S. Warneke, *Images of The Educational Traveller in Early Modern England* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 58) (Leiden. E. J. Brill, 1995).

the turn of the sixteenth century and mid-way through, the known cultural codes operating changed and a new set of configurations came into play. Anglo-Italian relations were inextricably wrought into this fabric. Both religion and culture with which it is inalienably associated were seeking self-definition in the wake of the cataclysmic upheaval brought about by the Reformation.

In evaluating the dynamics of the Anglo-Italian cultural discourse as a phenomenon of the times, it is a generally held conception that the influence was one way and not reciprocal. Curiously enough, however, the English preoccupation with Italy, the cynosure of Europe and role model for manners and civility, was destined to become something of an obsession giving rise to the antithetical poles of italomania and italophobia. This study examines, more particularly, the wave of italophobia which gripped a small section of English society at the time as a reaction to the *inglese italianato*,[7] for example, Roger Ascham and Thomas Nashe though there were others, such as John Lyly.[8] In the perception of these Philistines, the image that Italy projected was one of being Circe's Court or a modern Babylon: an irredeemable, morally barren land of vice, debauchery and corruption which claimed the sons of England ere they set foot on Italian soil.

By utilising the principles of hermeneutical exegesis as the analytical matrix for evaluation, this paper assesses attitudes of racial prejudice as manifested in specific texts. The paternalistic arrogance of the Protestant English moralist who perceives Italy and its corrupt, identity-less population and how he takes on board or receives that information, forms the basis of the argument. In the desire of one culture to extend its hegemony over another to the detriment of that other, he reproduces the prevailing nationalistic ideology of his time. 'Traditional Anglo-Saxon intolerance is a local and temporal culture-trait like any other.'[9] By the mid-sixteenth century, the cultural dialogue between England and Italy could draw on a long history of Anglo-Italian perspective. In the light of this, the insistence on their own cultural

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7 For an analysis as to why and how some ideas happen to be contagious, see D. Sperber, *Explaining Culture* (Oxford. Blackwell, 1996), 1ff.

8 J. Lyly, *Euphues: An Anatomy of Wit* Editio princeps (1579).

9 R. Benedict, *Patterns of culture* (Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 8.

superiority, sustained by the English fearful of the dilution of their morals and culture, was an affront to Italian pride: pride in himself, his country and his culture. In evaluating the response to alterity, Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* and Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* have been chosen for their similar expression of anti-Italian sentiment despite belonging to different genres: the former, an educational treatise and the latter, the forerunner of the historical novel, being a narrative *cum* travelogue. The travelogues of Fynes Moryson, Thomas Coryate and William Lithgow which are briefly discussed, are principally dominated by anti-religious, anti-popery bias.

The initial Anglo-Italian contacts in the fifteenth century were to develop by the fourth decade of the next century into two diametrically opposed attitudes towards Italy. 'Indeed, the dispraise accompanied the earliest praise, and ran counterpoint to it throughout.'[10] There was the Italy as perceived by the English humanists, a land of cultural wealth and scholarship well in advance of their own, whose learning they aspired to imbibe. Juxtaposed with this and existing concurrently, was the contagious perception[11] of the patriotic Protestants who viewed Italy as a morally depraved land of vice, popery and religious superstition. 'Both perspectives of the schizophrenic English attitude towards Italy had their champions and their influential disciples.'[12]

Since people create or fashion their social world through interaction, such conflicting attitudes have their source in deep-seated cultural prejudices which function as the control mechanisms that determine behaviour and shape human destiny. Here an 'ideographic approach'[13] is required. To this end, the contemporary background which produced the italophobe has already been hinted at;[14] insight into his character will come as his personality unfurls in the process of an objective assessment of his writings. 'Distrust of the Italian character, fear of Italy's Church

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10 G. B. Parks, 'The Decline and Fall of the English Renaissance Admiration of Italy,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 31 (1967-8), 342.

11 see Note 7 above.

12 K. R. Bartlett, 'The Strangeness of Strangers: English Impressions of Italy in the Sixteenth Century,' *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 1 (1980), 58.

13 G. Burrell & G. Morgan, *Sociological Paradigms & Organisational Analysis* (London. Heinemann, 1979), 6.

14 see above.

and contempt for her political disintegration prevented the Englishman from seeing how great a debt his culture owed to her.'[15]

In his study of 'The First Italianate Englishmen,'[16] G. B. Parks traces the evolution of the implications of *Italianate*. Its earliest connotation inferred someone who had a penchant for Italian scholarship and culture, as it was applied to John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, for example, who in his patronage of learning came close to the Italian Renaissance Prince. Later, it acquired the denigratory nuance it had in Ascham's day, whereby visitors to Italy returned to England affecting Italian manners and style of dress and worse still, having had their religious and moral values severely undermined, or so it was believed in the popular imagination. It also became a term of opprobrium for English Roman Catholic exiles in Rome who were being groomed for the recovery of England to the old faith.[17] Ultimately, it assumed an even more pejorative and sinister significance as used in Elizabethan drama, becoming synonymous with devilry, hypocrisy, intrigue, secret murders and public treacheries and was virtually interchangeable with Machiavellian.

Over the years, Machiavelli has been both misunderstood and misconstrued by his detractors. It was in the 1570's that *The Prince* (originally published posthumously in 1532) started to elicit strong reactions and was eventually placed on the index. Charges of gross immorality were levelled at it and the concept of Machiavellianism was born. This was mostly the result of misinterpretation of the work on the part of people such as Gentillet in France though by this time, *The Prince* was already known to English scholars returning from Italy. 'The drab little servant of a third rate state' as Machiavelli has been described,[18] in fact lived out his days in ignominy and poverty and was the last person whom one would think of calling Machiavellian with all the various connotations it has now acquired. However, it is the inherent violence taken out of context with all its ethical and moral implications that led to

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15 J. R. Hale, *England and The Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in its History and Art* (London, 1954), 34.

16 G. B. Parks, 'The First Italianate Englishmen,' *Studies in the Renaissance*, 8 (1961), 197-216.

17 J. Lievsay, *The Elizabethan Image of Italy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1964), 11.

18 G. Mattingly, 'Machiavelli' *The Penguin Book of The Renaissance*, J. H. Plumb (ed.) (Penguin, 1991), 55.

the flourishing of the Machiavellian myth in England. Machiavelli threw conventional morality out of the window and in a devastating indictment of classical and contemporary humanism stated that in a world in which most men are not good, a prince who strives to be good will not survive.[19]

Il furfante machiavellico[20] a direct descendant of the inhuman Senecan villain, thus became an integral ingredient of Elizabethan drama (and exclusive only to this genre) embodying all the debauchery and treachery which have, mistakenly, come to typify the Italian Renaissance in many people's minds. Yet, Machiavelli very definitely had his own code of ethics for his prince must be basically good. Thus, Agathocles of Sicily, for example, did not make a good prince because he came to power by criminal and nefarious methods[21] and his achievements could not be attributed either to Fortune or to *virtù*. That 'Machiavelli proposed the liberation of man from all moral values'[22] is a twentieth century interpretation. Contemporary readers of *The Prince* generally accept that it is a stark statement of fact; the art of statecraft as it is practised irrespective of the morality of that behaviour; an exercise in political manipulation *par excellence*. What counts is the success to succeed. Yet, in sixteenth century Europe, Machiavelli 'did in fact shatter the great images of moral and cosmological order which still dominated the imaginations of his contemporaries and which had served to organise human experience.'[23] The misconceptions surrounding the interpretation of Machiavelli's *Prince*[24] together with the discovery of Italian involvement in the 1571 Ridolfi plot against Elizabeth, inevitably fomented the anti-Italian and anti-Catholic hysteria in England.

Scholars are not in agreement as to the origin of the proverb *un inglese italianato è come un diavolo incarnato* as used derisively by

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19 G. Bull, *Niccolò Machiavelli: The Prince* (Penguin, 1962), 91.

20 M. Praz, 'Machiavelli e gl' inglesi dell'epoca elisabettiana' in *Machiavelli in Inghilterra ed altri saggi sui rapporti letterari anglo-italiani* (Firenze. G. C. Sansoni Editore, 1962), 112.

21 Bull, 63.

22 A. Boal, 'Machiavelli and the Poetics of Virtù' in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), 73.

23 J. A. Mazzeo, *Renaissance and Revolution: The Remaking of European Thought* (UP England, 1969), 71.

24 *cfr.* R. Ascham, *The Scholemaster* W. A. Wright (ed.) (Cambridge, 1904), 86.

Ascham towards the Italianized Englishman[25] and many think that he is the first to use it. Parks, in the same article on the first Italianate Englishmen, reveals that he has unearthed evidence which implies that it was current as a saying amongst the English and could not be traced in a 1581 listing of Italian proverbs.[26] On the other hand, Gage traces it back to the days of the fourteenth century English mercenary in Italy, Sir John Hawkwood (*sive* Giovanni Acuto) whose exploits provoked the saying which was then absorbed into common Italian parlance.[27] Ascham himself attributes it to being a jibe of Italian origin and in using it, he was referring to the style of living as well as religious opinions they adopted.[28] In a panegyric on the death of Horatio Pallavicino, the banker who had settled in England, Theophilus Field invented a corollary to it: 'an Italian Anglyfide, Becomes a Saint Angelifide.'[29] As a saying, therefore, it must have had fairly wide circulation.

Subsequent to Henry VIII's rupture with Rome there was a change in status of the observer and the observed. An Englishman travelling to Italy was no longer going to a place where he had common cultural and religious roots and similarly, in the Italian perception, these foreigners were now also different[30] and were regarded with suspicion. It had become a distinction between *us* and *them*. With the establishment of the Inquisition in 1542 the terrain became even more dangerous for English Protestants.

Notorious for his italophobia was Roger Ascham who in Tudor England was an intellectual of reasonable standing. He was steeped in the knowledge of the classics having been educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, a stronghold of scholarship and Protestant theology. Even in the pride he displays in his college he evinces an innate English prejudice to anything foreign, for he believes that the College turned out more learned men at any one time than the University of Louvain, even then a reputable seat of learning, managed to produce over many years.[31]

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25 *Ibid.*, 78.
26 Parks, 'The First Italianate Englishmen,' *Studies in the Renaissance*, 8 (1961), 216.
27 J. Gage, 'England in the Italian Renaissance,' *History Today* (October, 1960), 716.
28 *The Scholemaster*, 83.
29 F. A. Yates, *John Florio* (Cambridge. C.U.P., 1934), 36.
30 Bartlett, 'The Strangeness of Strangers,' *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 1 (1980), 50.
31 *The Scholemaster*, 62.

Several decades later, Thomas Nashe also became one of the sons of St. John's and was as proud of his college as was Ascham before him. However, this is the only certain biographical detail available for Nashe, unlike Ascham whose life has been fairly closely documented. For the purposes of the synchronic approach adopted by this study and hermeneutical exegesis, one can only assume that Nashe would have been nurtured by the same historical, educational and ideological milieu as Ascham, though if the latter was somewhat Puritanical, Nashe showed a confirmed dislike for Puritans.[32]

At St. John's, Ascham was greatly influenced by Sir John Cheke who was at the forefront of humanism at the University and whom, in *The Scholemaster,* he holds up as an example of moral rectitude to be emulated.[33] In 1540, Ascham was appointed first professor of Greek at his *alma mater.* He found favour with the Tudors and was never too far removed from Court. He was also one time tutor to the Princess (later Queen) Elizabeth who was an apt Italian scholar, and in spite of his religious beliefs was able to survive 'Bloody Mary's' reign of terror and did not suffer the same ignominious end which his mentor came to.

In his biography of Ascham, Ryan raises the issue as to 'Why Ascham, who had once longed to see all the wonders of Italy, and who never ceased to praise the Italian language for its beauty, should have turned upon this land so vehemently in *The Scholemaster.*'[34] Ascham does, however, admit in the text, to holding the Italian language in highest esteem after Latin and Greek.[35] One plausible explanation could be that while he appreciated the worth of Italian learning, he was only too painfully aware of the potentially inherent danger of the *iter italicum* which might result in the erosion of English culture, religion and traditional values due to the affectations being brought back to England by certain newly returned travellers. Furthermore, Rome represented the seat of the enemy. Thus it was that, faced with a new twist to the Italian experience which ironically was supposed to make a *compleat gentleman*, he put pen to paper to deplore in vituperative and vitriolic

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32 T. Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller* (Oxford. Blackwell, 1927), 62.

33 *The Scholemaster*, 62.

34 L. V. Ryan, *Roger Ascham* (Stanford, California. Stanford University Press, 1963), 259.

35 *The Scholemaster*, 69.

prose, the new cultural threat while 'the shining glories of Italian art were simply a negligible feature in the Elizabethan image of Italy.'[36] From general mechanisms at work in a given specific situation, there had been a mutation of the cultural configurations which in the long run, he believed, could only have a destabilising effect on the country. However, in spite of his diatribe, 'si trattava [...] di un costume sociale già consolidato'[37] so that about two hundred years later, between 1761 and 1763 according to Walpole, some forty thousand Englishmen crossed to the Continent to undertake the refining experience of what was just becoming known as *The Grand Tour*[38] of which the chief aim was 'to see and be seen.'[39]

The Scholemaster, a manual of education written in an Isocratean manner which became a hallmark of Ascham's prose style, is important along with Thomas Elyot's *The Book Named The Governour* (1531),[40] for the light it throws on Tudor attitudes and system of pedagogy. It is the work of the mature Ascham and the fruit of his life's learning for he was working on this in his last years. It was published posthumously by his widow in 1570 in order to sustain her family. Written within the compass of Christian humanist doctrine, the treatise is divided into two books. The first book is largely ethical in thrust dealing with the bringing up of youth whilst the second book deals with method and is aimed at inculcating the Latin tongue as well as principles of literary and rhetorical imitation. In Book One, Ascham digresses from his principal theme and in a harangue based on hearsay,[41] denounces the ill-effects on English youth of a journey to Italy, for they then return home *Italianated* to the detriment of the customs and culture of their native land.

Ascham, the Protestant moralist who feared the influence of papistry, was convinced that in one year spent in England, a young gentleman would learn more than in three years spent in Italy.[42] Ironically enough, in spite of his anti-Italian sentiment, it is the precepts inculcated

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36 Lievsay, 25.

37 V. J. Comparato, 'Viaggiatori inglesi in Italia tra sei e settecento: La formazione di un modello interpretativo,' *Quaderni Storici*, 42 (1979), 871.

38 *Ibid.*, 870f.

39 Howard, 144.

40 T. Elyot, *The Book Named The Governour* (Merston, England. The Scolar Press Ltd., 1970).

41 *The Scholemaster*, 53.

42 *Ibid.*, 61.

in Castiglione's *Book of The Courtier*[43] that he recommends. A closer look at *The Scholemaster* shows how social relations of domination are inscribed in prejudiced attitudes and in cultural practices. Ascham adopts the position of a member of a superior culture looking down on an inferior culture for 'Italie now is not that Italie that it was wont to be,'[44] contrasting its former splendour with what he saw as its current degradation. His central and recurrent thesis is that youth will not learn wisdom or honesty in that environment and he does not waver in his outright moral condemnation of the country and its people. He sees it as a land of vanities, vice, debauchery and corruption, a glittering Babylon and he is anxious for the moral fibre of England's youth, fearing that 'Some Circes shall make him of a plaine English man, a right Italian'[45] which he sees as the acme of degradation for 'un inglese italianato è come un diavolo incarnato.'[46] The likening of Italy to Circe's Court becomes the *leitmotif* of the piece. Ascham, in his prejudice, accuses the Italians of 'pride in them selves, contempt of others' recommending the pursuit of virtue as the remedy.[47] In his moralising, the text reads like a sermon as he sets himself up as both judge and jury.

The Homeric theme of metamorphosis and transformation, negative images of which permeate the text together with those of bewitchment and enchantment, constitutes a unifying thread. Ulysses is held up as a moral exemplar who, like Spenser's Guyon in the Bower of Bliss, emerges from his trials unscathed. Ascham admits that he knows many English nobles who have been subjected to the Siren songs of Italy without being *Italianated*, but in general, Italy is seen to exert an evil corrupting force more powerful than that of Circe, undermining the well-being and morality of the individual who returns to England with worse manners and less learning than when he left the country.[48] Accompanied by tutors, the wards have some chance of being kept on the straight and narrow.[49] However, they had to beware of the Jesuits who used to try to separate

43 B. Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (London. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1959).
44 *The Scholemaster*, 70.
45 *Ibid.*, 72.
46 *Ibid.*, 78.
47 *Ibid.*, 76.
48 *Ibid.*, 74.
49 *Ibid.*, 73.

the two so as to exert pressure on the young Englishman to return to orthodoxy. In bolstering his arguments, Ascham cites the authority of ancient pagan and Christian texts, but mostly the former, displaying his classical training. This section of the work is of interest for its use of language and the manner in which it puts across its message for 'Literature is a practice that acts upon language and therefore enters into a complex relation to those language practices - or discourses - that shape the social relations of the context in which it is produced and of the context in which it is received.'[50]

There is a lively personal note to his writing which obtrudes. The reader is constantly aware of his presence. He takes a paternal attitude towards England's youth in his desire to preserve them from the destructive charms of Italy. As a deterrent, he uses forceful images of transformation: monsters, swine, asses, foxes, wolves. He plays on their psychology, the ultimate insult being when he reviles them as 'you Italian English men.' He sees it as a case of the pupils surpassing the master and then, to add insult to injury, having taught them new ways, the Italians scorn their pupils![51] Ascham warns the reader of 'the inchantementes of Circes, brought out of Italie to marre mens manners in England'[52] which would be almost repeated *verbatim* by Nashe. Yet his main preoccupation appears to be a concern with religious alienation recalling when papistry overflowed in England, covering it as a standing pool in his forefathers' time. Homer, Plato and David constitute the three pillars of his argument while he denounces the idols of the humanists, Petrarch and Boccaccio charging them with atheism.[53] He warns of the insidiousness of popery using deprecatory language, mentioning 'idle monks and wanton canons'[54] also denouncing Catholic ritual and ceremonial in much the same vein as Lithgow would later write and setting England up, in contrast, as the epitome of devotion.[55] Throughout, Ascham's prejudice is based on preconceived ideas. He seeks justification of Protestantism and English ways through a scathing indictment of anything Italian so that while validating his own world, he devalues that of Italy.

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50 J. Brenkman, *Culture and Domination* (Cornell U. P., 1987), 108f.
51 *The Scholemaster*, 78.
52 *Ibid.*, 79.
53 *Ibid.*, 83f.
54 *Ibid.*, 81.
55 *Ibid.*, 87.

It is thought that Nashe who wrote so convincingly about Italy, displaying the same anti-Italian sentiment as Ascham albeit using different tools, had, in fact, never been there and Ascham himself had only spent nine days in the country. *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) as has been previously indicated, is a different genre to that employed in writing *The Scholemaster*. Thus, while Ascham's intention was to edify, Nashe's was to thrill while inculcating a moral lesson. Insight into Ascham's personality can be gleaned from the text in which he is omnipresent; insight into Nashe can only come through his protagonist who functions as his *portavoce*. His fictitious story is set in the early sixteenth century though he acquires a *vraisemblance* for it by mentioning Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, Erasmus and Sir Thomas More among others, locating his principal character, Jack Wilton, in a recognisable landscape among identifiable people. Wilton, the narrator, is page to the Earl of Surrey - another realistic detail. Like Ascham, Nashe displays his Cambridge training, citing classics and the scriptures. The work is obviously a parody of the chivalric romance with Surrey's love, Geraldine, being a forerunner of Cervantes' Dulcinea and many of its elements prefiguring *Don Quixote* as well as Defoe and Fielding. Ascham's enchantress, Circe, has become Geraldine who has 'come out of Italie to bewitch all the wise men of England'[56] and the images of metamorphosis recur as Surrey himself admits to having been changed from his usual self.[57] He expresses misgivings about visiting Italy hoping that its influence will work no change but it exerts some fatal attraction for he is still notwithstanding, impatient to get there, his proposed intention being a fairly extensive tour. As Wilton and Surrey set out on their journey, the narrative assumes the style of a travelogue. No sooner do they arrive in Italy than they begin to be subjected to its pernicious influence. They are not psychologically or morally prepared for the ensuing evils that befall them.

They are taken to the house of a courtesan, Tabitha, the Temptress, Circe in new garb. Here, the narrative assumes an ironic tone, Nashe being well known for his barbed pen. Surrey and Wilton have changed roles, the page becoming the master and *vice versa*. The evils of Italy soon begin to manifest themselves, Tabitha in all her treachery securing

56 *The Unfortunate Traveller,* 40. *cfr. The Scholemaster*, Note 52 above.
57 *The Unfortunate Traveller,* 40.

the complicity of Surrey, now the page, to do away with his master so as to enjoy his wealth. The notion is shocking because sentiments of loyalty of a servant to his master (or rather, master to his page) do not operate here. Wilton, the master admits to being a novice, unprepared for the bribery and deceit he finds in Italy. With Nashe we are in a far more sinister moral landscape than we were in Ascham, so much so that it is Satan who plants in them 'the first Italionate wit' they had or so Wilton believes.[58] Nashe, however, considers that 'wit' or knowledge is not to be had through travel and recommends books as an adequate source of learning.[59] Barring Castiglione's *Courtier*, Ascham had condemned outright all imported Italian books and books in translation, chiding the censors for allowing them to be brought into England.[60] *The Unfortunate Traveller* warns of the dangers of serving a prince or at court,[61] themes which would be developed by Webster. The narrative is permeated by images of enchantment and bewitchment reminiscent of Circe's Court in Ascham.

In parodying the affectations of the English traveller to Italy, Nashe's hero gets into trouble in Rome for not conforming to the usual style of dress but instead, 'imitated foure or fiue sundry nations in [his] attire at once'[62] while the traveller usually returns home hiding his weary face under a broad French hat.[63] The seriousness and high moral purpose in Ascham gives way to occasional bouts of the burlesque in Nashe. However, Italy is equated with villainy and the burlesque is tempered with the most repulsive, violent and macabre episodes which are described in minute detail, with all their moral and ethical implications as in the case of the fate met by, on the one hand, Heraclide and her husband[64] and on the other, Zadoch[65] and Cutwolfe.[66] Even though the latter was avenging heinous crimes, in advocating and justifying revenge, morality required that he should die. But Nashe has the same lesson as Ascham to teach:

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58 *Ibid.*, 56.
59 *Ibid.*, 94f.
60 *The Scholemaster*, 79.
61 *The Unfortunate Traveller*, 56.
62 *Ibid.*, 77.
63 *Ibid.*, 95.
64 *Ibid.*, 83f.
65 *Ibid.*, 110f.
66 *Ibid.*, 122.

> Countriman, tell me what is the occasion of thy straying so farre out of England, to visit this strange Nation? If it bee languages, thou maist learne them at home, nought but lasciuiousnesse is to bee learned here.[67]

Out of his natural abode, a man does not thrive but withers.[68] To demonstrate the futility of the Italian experience so eagerly sought by Englishmen, Nashe likens these 'insolent fancies' to Icarus's ephemeral waxen wings which melted in the heat of the sun, and thus will only abandon the gullible, unwary traveller into a sea of confusion.[69]

The text is also punctuated by anti-Catholic and anti-popery bias. In meting out punishment to the maid who unknowingly gave his concubine, Juliana, a phial of poison, the pope is supposed to have taken pity on her as the crime was unintentional, so he allowed her to go scot-free giving her no other punishment than to drink the remaining poison![70] This is a supreme example of Nashe's capacity for debunking.

> Italy the Paradice of the earth, and the Epicures heauen, how doth it forme our yong master? It makes him to kis his hand like an ape, cringe his necke like a starueling, and play at hey passe repasse come aloft when he salutes a man. From thence he brings the art of atheisme, the art of epicurising, the art of whoring, the art of poysoning, the art of Sodomitrie. The onely probable good thing they haue to keepe vs from vtterly condemning it, is, that it maketh a man an excellent Courtier [...].[71]

In this, Nashe crystallises all the usual objections to Italy of the hysterical, prejudiced italophobes and what a scathing indictment of the courtier with all its implications! Ascham, too, had indicated that the Court was not a suitable milieu in which English youth could receive a sound moral grounding.[72]

A cross-section of writings bearing witness to 'the Italies of British travellers,'[73] that is, the impressions of Italy taken home by the visitor are indicative of prevailing attitudes. Thus, Henry Wotton, English

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67 *Ibid.*, 92.
68 *Ibid.*, 98.
69 *Ibid.*
70 *Ibid.*, 114.
71 *Ibid.*, 96.
72 *The Scholemaster*, 68.
73 M. Pfister (ed.) *The Fatal Gift of Beauty: The Italies of British Travellers* (Amsterdam-Atlanta. Rodopi, 1996).

Ambassador to Venice wrote: 'I live here in a paradise inhabited by devils.'[74] In the travelogues of Moryson, Coryate and Lithgow which demonstrate a culturally determined religious prejudice in the reception of *otherness*, their varying reactions to Catholic ritual are significant. Moryson, who was clearly a Protestant, is sceptical of the reports of miracles worked at Loreto but 'Papists will have all their miracles believed.'[75] Coryate observes and records the pomp and solemnity of the religious ceremony at Vercelli on St. John Baptist's Day,[76] but not with the utter horror later evinced by Lithgow. The latter displays a contempt for the superstition and idolatry which he sees at Loreto. He writes of 'this falsely patronised chapel' and of 'Loretan avariciousness.' He has an innate aversion to Catholic ritual and mocks the fickle crowds who move from the perception of a worshipper as a saintly holy woman apparently in a trance to that of her being a sick woman possessed by the devil! A Capuchin friar is referred to as a 'silly old conjuror [...] false dissembling knave.'[77] There is no tolerance. The concept of Italy as a land of vice and licentiousness was standard and would endure. For example, John Evelyn, a student in Padua in 1645 reiterated this notion.[78] Later on, the nature of the criticism would change. There would be new evils, with the English traveller to Italy finding himself being cheated and overcharged which Tobias Smollett complained about.[79]

Stephen Greenblatt states in his fine study of the Renaissance, that self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange or hostile.[80] Sixteenth century italophobes identified this threatening *Other* with Italy, its culture, its religion and its people. In order to be attacked and destroyed it has been discovered and invented. Ascham's and Nashe's message is loud and clear, the theme is persistent: a youth will not become a *compleat gentleman* in Italy. Both are outright

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74 *Ibid.*, 5.2.1, 356.

75 F. Moryson, *An Itinerary* (Glasgow. James MacLehose & Sons, 1907), Vol. I, 217.

76 T. Coryate, *Coryat's Crudities* (Glasgow. James MacLehose & Sons, 1905), Vol. I, 234.

77 W. Lithgow, *The Rare Adventures & Painefull Peregrinations* (Glasgow. James MacLehose & Sons, 1906), 24f.

78 Pfister (ed.) *The Fatal Gift of Beauty*, 4.2.6, 167.

79 *Ibid.*, 2.8, 85.

80 S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1984), 9.

in their condemnation of Italian travel. If youths want to learn foreign languages, they will learn them better at home. Their main preoccupations were fear of moral corruption, undermining of religion, erosion of English culture including the adoption of affectations alien to the native character. Acerbity is the hallmark of both texts. The images used had become commonplace: Italy as a paradise inhabited by devils which bewitched the unwary traveller juxtaposed with Italy as a corrupting force which transformed him into a beast coupled with the fawning apishness adopted by the travellers on their return home. In using the Homeric image of Circe, Ascham acquired respectability for his text citing an authoritative source and perpetuating an image that the erudite reading public was familiar with in all its connotations. While Ascham was preaching to a faceless, collective English youth, Nashe's fictitious representation of the same issues is possibly all the more potent because the reader becomes involved with the characters who acquire a reality of their own. The three visitors to Italy in their individual responses to the same stimulus are representative of the prejudiced English position towards Catholicism which is indicative of the chasm that the Reformation opened up in the sixteenth century. Therefore, while humanism made for cultural unity,[81] religion engendered cultural diversity.

Ascham, Nashe and other italophobes gave voice to anxieties deeply embedded in the fabric of the English character. Their private visions and personal destinies were manipulated by the mutation of cultural determinants at work in sixteenth century England. These exerted a shaping power over their lives and identity. Eminent scholars such as J. R. Hale[82] and J. Lievsay[83] have pointed out that their reactive stance prevented them from being able to take full advantage of what Italian culture had to offer. In their rejection of the *otherness* of Italy afraid of its subversive influence, they bear witness to English prejudice. They adopted a dominant, condescending pose in their defence of their own culture, venerating it while denigrating that of *proud Italy*.

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81 D. Hay, *The Italian Renaissance in its historical background* (C.U.P., 1961), 201.
82 see Note 15 above.
83 see Note 36 above.

Felicia's Fantasy: The Vespers of Palermo

Roderick Cavaliero

Given the number of works from contemporary pens which were set in *Italia,* it was strange that Walter Scott did not add to them. In his fragment of autobiography he confessed that Tasso and Ariosto, even in translation, had convinced him that the Italian language contained a fund of romantic lore. He even enrolled in a class of Italian and acquired 'some proficiency,' tackling Dante, Boiardo and Pulci, in the original.[1] *Orlando Furioso* and *Gerusalemme Liberata* were part of the inspiration for his crusading novels, *The Talisman, Ivanhoe* and *Count Robert of Paris*.[2] But he did not have enough Italian to help him with his conversations, many years later, with the King of the Two Sicilies and the Archbishop of Tarentum, where his French and their Italian was mutually incomprehensible.[3] If he did not publish an Italian tale, he certainly belonged to the 'stiletto school.'[4] But his Scotland was an *Italia* in itself, and could provide for 'the Master Spirit of the history of the Middle Ages [...] spectres, magic, abbeys, castles, subterranean passages

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1 *Memoir of his early years written by himself* 26 April 1808, forming chapter 1 of J. G. Lockhart's *The Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Everyman edition), 35.

2 Scott did not waste his essay in translating the opening of *Orlando Furioso.* In *Rob Roy* (chapter xvi) Francis Osbaldistone showed it to Diana Vernon, the borders blue-stocking, who knew her Ariosto in Italian!

3 This venerated and cultivated man had a palazzo in Naples at which he entertained the intellectuals of the city. He managed to be on good terms with Joachim Murat, when he was King of Naples, and with the restored Bourbons. A visit to him was almost mandatory for any visitor to the city with pretensions to such a sobriquet. Samuel Rogers was much taken with the cats which formed the principal members of his household. *The Italian Journal of Samuel Rogers* J. R. Hale (ed.) (London, 1956), 252.

4 Compare 'But in Italy the secret stiletto was the weapon of revenge and the murder of one was avenged by the assassination of another until the list of expiatory murders ran high'. (M. Shelley, *Valperga*, 1823 edition (London), Vol. 1, 86) with 'Like a cowardly Italian, he had recourse to his fatal stiletto to murder the man whom he dared not meet in manly encounter.' [W. Scott, 'The Two Drovers,' in *Chronicles of the Canongate (*1827) (Oxford World's Classic, 1934, 155)].

and praeternatural appearances' enough.[5] He confessed that he had once toyed with writing a romance about Giovanna of Naples, a figure who, like Mary Queen of Scots, was either 'a model of female virtue or a monster of atrocity.'[6] But he was too good an historian to alter the past to make a novel. His portrait of Mary Queen of Scots in *The Abbott*, is probably as near the mark as can be, and William Gell thought he gave up the idea of writing about Giovanna of Naples because he was inclined to take her part. That would have been good history but a poor story.[7]

Apart from *The Siege of Malta,* on which he tried to work during his visit to Italy in 1832, the nearest he came to selecting Italy as the locale for a story was *Il Bizarro,* an 'Italian story of corruption and assassination,' never published in his lifetime.[8] He was not well enough to profit from the treasure trove of horror he was offered by the Duke of Corchiano (or Santa Croce) in Rome whose collection included 'all the murders, poisonings, intrigues and curious adventures of all the great Roman families over many centuries.'[9] Scott and Byron were two international figures who gave to Italy more than they took. Hitherto, plots for opera had been largely taken from the works of the dramatist whom Leopardi acknowledged as the greatest Italian poet since Tasso,

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5 *Sir Walter Scott in Italy,* an extract from Sir William Gell's *Reminiscences* J. C. Corson (ed.) (Edinburgh, 1957), 20.

6 *Ibid,* 9. Giovanna I, 1327-82, ruled as Queen of Naples from 1343, succeeding her Angevin grandfather, Robert the Wise. She was married four times, and was popularly supposed to have had a hand in the death of her first husband. She ceded Avignon to the Papacy for public exoneration of that deed. Her detractors accused her of ruling Naples through favourites, some of whom were her lovers, and she was ultimately dethroned and murdered by one of her nephews when she willed away the kingdom to another. She was the subject of Walter Savage Landor's Neapolitan trilogy *Andrea of Hungary* (husband number one), *Giovanna of Naples* (both 1839) and *Fra Rupert* (1840).

7 Gell, 9.

8 A Calabrian tale he had picked up on his travels about a bandit who strangled his new born child in case its crying revealed his whereabouts to his pursuers. His wife in revenge hacked off his head and claimed the reward for his capture dead or alive. Scott's handwriting, after his stroke, had become so bad that neither Lockhart nor Scott's publisher could read it, and what they could read they judged to be an absolute failure. E. Johnson, Sir *Walter Scott, The Great Unknown* 2 vols. (London, 1970), ii, 1232, 1270.

9 Gell, 30.

Pietro Metastasio. Tales from Greece, Rome and the ancient orient had formed the staple of tragic opera, even Mozart's last opera being dedicated to the Emperor Titus. Now librettists were ready to explore a wider range of plots, which repudiated the classical unities and the conventions of Italian opera that dictated how and when solos, duets, ensembles and choruses should be sung. Rossini, the Napoleon of music, broke down the old frontiers, choosing not only stories from the Bible *(Mosè in Egitto)*, the classical world *(Ermione)*, the ancient orient *(Semiramide, Ciro in Babilonia, Aureliano in Palmyra)* but from the mediaeval world *(Tancredi, Sigismondo, Maometto II, and Guillaume Tell)*. Rossini dominated the romantic opera of the early nineteenth century as Scott dominated the romantic novel. Just as England had no indigenous operatic tradition – Handel, when he did not write Italian operas, presented his English work in the form of oratorio, Purcell, in the form of vaudeville - so Italy had no romantic novels on which to draw for operatic plots. Perhaps it was no irony that *I Promessi Sposi* (1827, translated first into English as *The Betrothed Lovers* in 1828) is often referred to as the Italian novel Scott never wrote.[10]

The first translation (into French) of a Scott novel was *Quentin Durward* (1816) and others followed quickly so that by 1820 he was more widely read than any other novelist of the time, quite extinguishing the taste for the epistolary novels of Richardson and Laclos, and eclipsing Voltaire and Madame de Staël. Most European readers without English would have read Scott in French and, as his Scottish novels were too alien, they read, mainly, his mediaeval romances.[11] And they proved to be the quarry to which opera librettists turned to meet the inexhaustible stream of requests for suitable subjects.[12] What they did with the plots is

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10 Scott would have liked to meet Manzoni in 1832, whose novel he admired, but he was too keen to return to Scotland to make the deviation to Milan. Johnson, ii, 1246. *I Promessi Sposi* was the first opera (1856) by Amilcare Ponchielli who did not achieve fame until *La Gioconda* was performed at La Scala in 1876.

11 Though Santa Croce in Rome rebuked Scott for the death of Clara Mowbray in *St. Ronan's Well,* one of Scott's most delightful but least famous Scottish romances. Johnson, ii, 1245.

12 Abraham Borg, in his essay *Ivanhoe - dal Romanzo al Pasticcio* in *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* Vol. 5 (1997), 108f lists the libretti which owed their inspiration to Scott. Among the more famous, that made it to the stage, are Rossini's *La Donna del Lago,* Bellini's *Il Pirata* and *I Puritani* and Donizetti's *Elizabetta di Kenilworth* /cont...

often pure travesty. In 1826, a pastiche of *Ivanhoe* was mounted in Paris provided by the Neapolitan Antonio Pacini with music from Rossini's other operas, its plot reduced to six characters among whom both Leila and the Jew had become Muslims, in order not to offend the powerful Franco-Jewish bankers.[13]

The early nineteenth century was rich in history novelists and painters who flocked to Italy for their subjects. It also had its history poets. Felicia Hemans was one of the most prolific. There was hardly a subject she was not prepared to celebrate in rhyme: the Last Banquet of Antony and Cleopatra; Belshazzar's Feast; Heliodorus in the Temple, Richard Coeur de Lion; the death of Conradin; Arabella Stuart; Inez de Castro. Born in Liverpool in 1793, two years before John Keats, Felicia Browne was the daughter of the union between an Irish merchant from Sligo and a Wagner, whose name, she claimed, was a corruption of the Venetian Veniero, borne by two Doges and by the Commander of the fleet of the Republic at Lepanto. Felicia's maternal grandfather had been consul in Liverpool for the Tuscan government, and that was as near as she ever got to Italy. From childhood she was blessed with great beauty and a great capacity for self-instruction, living in the Welsh hills near Abergele in Denbighshire, in a house with a large library and a convenient apple tree in which she would sit to read Shakespeare. She had a remarkably retentive memory and could quote, as she later wrote, poetry by the yard. Her childhood was spent in the very nursery of Romantic sensibility, and she published her first book of poems at the age of fourteen. Despite its sniffy reception she was not daunted, and duly fell in love, like a Jane Austen heroine, with a fine uniform inhabited by an unworthy soldier. She had to wait three years for him to complete his service in the Peninsula, before she married Captain Hemans of the King's Own Regiment in 1812. Six years and five children later the Captain, whose eye was of a roving disposition, decamped to Rome, for his health. It was probably his presence there that prevented the author of *Lays of Many Lands* from going to Italy herself, but this prolific and cosmopolitan writer never left Britain's shores, being even less travelled than another

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/cont. and *Lucia di Lammermoor,* but there were nineteen others, drawing on *The Talisman, The Fair Maid of Perth, The Heart of Midlothian* and *The Bride of Lammermoor.* The *Bride* was translated into Italian in 1824 and inspired at least two other Italian operas in addition to Donizetti's.

13 Borg, *JAIS* Vol. 5, 114-124.

prolific and cosmopolitan writer, Ann Radcliffe, who at least got as far as the Netherlands. But the burdens of family and the education of her sons, two of whom went eventually to join their father in Rome, kept her in, first, Wales and, then, in Wavertree near the city of her birth.

She declined an invitation to go the United States to edit a literary periodical in Boston. Having taught herself to read French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, she gave herself free range among their historical figures and, setting herself to play the piano, even composed airs for her own lyrics.[14] Her reputation was at one time quite as high as her fellow Romantic poets, there being, in the opinion of William Michael Rossetti, 'probably no female poet in our language whose works are more affectionately remembered, and whose lyrics are held in higher esteem, by persons of cultivated taste.'[15] He was remarkably blind to the claims of other female poets, particularly of his own sister, Christina.

She assumed her prophetic mantle early on, in 1816, with *The Celebration of the Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy,* a long poem demonstrating her extensive acquaintance with the pinnacles of classical and renaissance art, largely culled from the popular *Classical Tour through Italy* by the clergyman, John Chetwode Eustace (1815). It opened with what had become, by now, almost a habitual greeting to the 'Land of departed fame!' and proceeds with a long allusive litany of heroes of art and intellect, all dead and gone - 'glory's faded smile / Sheds a lingering light o'er many a mould'ring pile; / Proud wreck of vanish'd power, of splendour fled, / Majestic temple of the mighty dead.' She almost reaches sublimity when she apostrophises the

> Eternal City! round whose Curule throne
> The lords of nations knelt in ages flown;
> Thou whose Augustan years have left to time
> Immortal records of their glorious prime;
> When deathless bards, thine olive shades among,
> Swell'd the high raptures of heroic song.

The poem continues in this Byronic strain, in the hope that the return of the looted memories of their glorious past might rouse young bosoms to noblest aims and 'a new Rome in phoenix grandeur burst.'[16]

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14 From the memoir by William Michael Rossetti in *The Poetical Works of Mrs. Hemans* (London, Ward Lock, 1906), v-ix.

15 From the 'Sketch of the Life of Mrs. Felicia Hemans' (unsigned) in *Poetical Works* (London, John Dicks, no date).

16 *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy* II, 280-5, 301, 307.

Felicia Hemans also tried her hand at romantic drama and *The Vespers* of *Palermo,* a play in five acts in blank verse, was performed for one night only at Covent Garden. She wrote it in 1821, the year that John Keats died, but she had to wait for two years until the management was persuaded to put it on by the Reverend Reginald Heber, later the first Anglican Bishop of Calcutta, widely remembered, like Mrs. Hemans herself for one poem, the hymn *From Greenland's Icy Mountains, From India* 's *Coral Strand.* John Murray bought the copyright for 200 guineas, and the Hemans family in St Asaph waited all agog for a triumph. Alas, it was a dismal failure. Though the lead was played by Charles Kemble, the principal actress was hissed and when she decided on an unscheduled and spontaneous 'death' in the last moments of the play, for which there was no warrant in the script, she called down derision. Kemble was not used to being associated with failure and refused to appear again with the same player. Another not being ready to learn the part, the play was not repeated, and Mrs Hemans accepted the disappointment stoically as proper chastisement for the temerity of a female who had no business to write tragedies.[17]

The play was originally to be called *Procida,* after its principal protagonist, but as the revolt was better known from its timing than from its leader, it was dubbed *The Vespers of Palermo.* The original rising had erupted as the church bells rang for vespers on Easter Sunday, 29 March 1282, and was directed against the hated Angevin government. The French were slaughtered wherever they were found, men, women and children, without mercy, even the Sicilian girls who had married Frenchmen, while the religious of both sexes who could not pronounce *ciciri*, a Sicilian word the French tongue could not embrace, were torn from their convents and butchered in the streets.[18] None of this is the subject of Felicia Hemans's drama. The revolt was seen as the long overdue (and successful) reaction of an Italian people to foreign oppression. In 1282 and in 1821, Sicilians were not immediately thought of, by those who knew them, as Italians. They spoke a language strongly laced with Arabic words, and their island had been ruled by other European nations since the Vandal

17 Letter to the Rev. Henry Milman, 16 December 1823 *Felicia Hemans, Poetical Works, with Life and Portrait* (London, John Dicks, no date), 123f.

18 S. Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), 214f.

occupation of Carthage in the fifth century AD. Its incorporation into the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies under the Bourbon King Charles in 1738, brought it into the embrace of a specifically Italian principality and under King Ferdinand IV (of Naples) and III (of Sicily) and I (of the Two Sicilies) (1751-1825), who spent most of the Napoleonic period, under British protection, in Palermo, it was ruled for the first time by a native Italian speaker, even if that Italian was Neapolitan.

Felicia Hemans knew nothing of Sicily but she was ready to put any historical story into verse, and in 1819 she had a model to hand. Jean François Casimir Delavigne (1793-1843) was a court poet, granted a sinecure in the Paris revenue office for a poem on the birth of the King of Rome. He was good at holding on to sinecures - after the Bourbon Restoration he became an honorary librarian - and in 1819 was hailed for saving French theatre with *Les Vêpres Siciliennes.* Delavigne enjoys the reputation of the now totally forgotten, a footnote in the history of literature, not unlike Mrs Hemans herself, and both their Vespers would be forgotten but for the tireless search for a plot by Eugene Scribe which gave us an opera by Verdi. It was Verdi's first opera for Paris (1855), and the massacre of a chorus of Frenchmen with which the opera ends - Wagner called it 'a night of carnage' - needed to be tempered with the suggestion that they did not wholly deserve their fate. Unlike Mrs Hemans and Delavigne, who both made Procida an agent of liberation from that thirteenth century Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles of Anjou, Scribe made him 'a common conspirator with the inevitable dagger in his hand'[19] No one should expect accurate history from tragedies in five acts or from libretti which require star-crossed lovers, usually on opposite sides, as happens in all three versions here, and a stage-ful of deaths before the curtain finally comes down. But they can often suggest that, while this may not be exactly what happened, if circumstances were right, it could happen again. The invasion of Sicily by a thousand red shirts in 1860 was not a Sicilian Vespers, but, like the Vespers, it changed history. The Sicilians may not have risen to expel the Bourbon tyrant, Francis II, described by Tommaso di Lampedusa in *Il Gattopardo* as a mild-mannered, shy, devout, Italian-speaking 'seminarist dressed up as a

19 Verdi to Louis Crosnier, intendant of the Paris Opera, quoted J. Budden *Verdi* (London, 1985), 69. Nothing Verdi could say or do could persuade Scribe to change it.

general,'[20] but they did not defend him and Sicily was the first province to be offered to the King of Sardinia in Turin, the future first King of Italy. The irony was that it was a Hispano-Neapolitan colony not an Italian heartland like Lombardy, Tuscany or Emilia-Romagna. But it was deemed a part of Italy by those who read their Gibbon and Mrs Hemans.

In *The Vespers of Palermo* the Sicilian grievance is made quite clear. Sicily was 'no land of peace; unless that deep / And voiceless terror, which doth freeze men's thoughts/ Back to their source, and mantle its pale mien / With a dull hollow semblance of repose / May so be called.'[21] Mrs. Hemans rises at certain moments to real dramatic effect. The tyrant (Eribert, the Angevin viceroy: Hemans, not being a historian, makes the occupants Provençal) had in true Macbeth fashion had all the children of the Sicilian grandee, Montalba, murdered.

Montalba describes how, returning to his castle, he 'called - my struggling voice

	Gave utterance to my wife's, my children's names. They answered not. I roused my failing strength And wildly rushed within - And they were there
Procida	And all was well?
Montalba	Ah well! for death is well: And they were all at rest! [...]
Raimondo (Procida's son)	Man of woe! What words hath pity for despair like thine?
Montalba	Pity! fond youth - My soul disdains the grief Which doth unbosom its deep secrecies To ask a vain companionship of tears, And so to be relieved.
Procida	For woes like these There is no sympathy but vengeance.[22]

The massacre is not the climax of the play as in Verdi's opera, but happens in the middle of the tyrant's marriage to his bride victim, for which the vesper bells are tolling. The theme of sexual as well as national liberation appealed to Sir Walter Scott, who had shown his sympathy for the insurrectionary oppressed in *Rob Roy* and *The Legend of Montrose.*

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20 G. T. di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard) (Milan, 1960), 24.

21 *Vespers* Act I Scene 3, ll 245-50.

22 *Ibid*, Act II Scene 3 ll 36-42, 51-8.

He should have been appalled at the violence Felicia Hemans had done to history in *The Vespers,* but no, and in April 1822, he produced it for the Edinburgh theatre. Joanna Baillie recommended the play, Mrs Siddons had agreed to play the romantic female lead, Constance, the sister of the last Hohenstaufen emperor whom the Angevins had executed; it was prefaced by a special tribute from a fellow Edinburgher to the poet, novelist and producer, and had an epilogue by Walter Scott himself, both recited by the *grande dame* herself.[23] It had twice the success it had enjoyed in London, being performed twice. As a play, *The Vespers of Palermo* is no worse than many of its era and from time to time has moments that set the blood racing. Stripped to essentials it would have made a good opera plot, provided the Vespers themselves, as Scribe saw to it, formed the climax rather than the end only of Act 3.

The heirs to the Gothic novelists were the nineteenth century opera librettists who were only too happy to sup full of horrors, which could safely be ascribed to autocratic, clerical despots of whom there continued to be many in Europe until the third quarter of the century. The mantle of the stiletto school fitted them perfectly. Literary pretensions did not worry them. Felicia Hemans was not a failed librettist, but a successful poet. Successful but now little read. As she lamented of Properzia Rossi, a once celebrated female sculptor of Bologna:

> I depart
> Unknown, though Fame goes with me; I must leave
> The earth unknown.[24]

Almost unknown. But where will the names of Sting and Bob Geldof be in a hundred years time? In the annals of popular music or among the honoured list of 'awakeners,' the first to the fate of the indigenous Amerindian tribes of Brazil, the second to famine in Africa? Their example is the excuse for resurrecting from the doom of history the memory of a poet whose reputation once stood as high as Sting's and

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23 Scott did not actually meet Felicia Hemans until 1829 and found her charming. Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) was a Scottish playwright and poet, whose *de Montfort,* her 'tragedy of hatred,' played for eleven nights at Drury Lane in 1800 with John Kemble and Mrs Siddons in the leading parts.

24 *Properzia Rossi* ll 7-9.

whose popularity rivalled that of Bob Geldof's and who belongs to the honoured ranks of 'awakeners' to the plight of Italy in the early nineteenth century.[25]

25 Felicia Hemans is also being extolled among early feminist writers in that she helped to 'feminise' national history that had hitherto been a masculine preserve. Many of her poems, including *The Vespers of Palermo,* dealt with the 'suffering, victimisation or sacrifice, willing or unwilling of a female protagonist.' G. Kelly, 'Last Men: Hemans and Mary Shelley in the 1820s,' *Romanticism* (Edinburgh University Press, 3.2, 1997), 203.

Figuring Disorder: Women Travellers in Italy

Jane Stabler

At the end of the eighteenth century the popularity of the gothic novel in Britain created a view of Italy as a natural ideal and a social disaster. Its sublime mountains and picturesque ruins were awe-inspiring, but peopled with dangerous hoards of ruthless *banditti*. The heroine of Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* looks on the dark Italian woods and 'almost [expects] to see *banditti* start up from under the trees.'[1] As Maggie Kilgour observes, Emily is 'obsessively, ludicrously, worried about *banditti*, whom she constantly fears threaten her.'[2] Indeed, the natural power of the sublime was often merged with that of outlaw violence: in *The Italian*, for example, one particularly striking mountain is depicted '[standing] like a ruffian, huge, scar[r]ed, threatening, and horrid!.'[3]

After the momentous political events of 1789, the antics of Italian *banditti* allowed Radcliffe to deal at a distance with the revolutionary excesses of the lower orders of society. Repeatedly in *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* Emily imagines that the subversive aggression of the *banditti* will be directed against her, a gentlewoman. This threat is realised in *A Sicilian Romance* when the heroine is discovered 'struggling in the grasp of a ruffian.'[4] Her situation is a fictional counterpart to that of Edmund Burke's hapless Marie Antoinette in his narrative of the storming of the queen's bedroom in *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

Given that the Italian landscape was so closely associated with marauding criminals, it is hardly surprising that Radcliffe's heroines take most delight in natural vistas when they view them from a place of (secure) imprisonment. Once again, however, it is difficult to separate aesthetic enjoyment from the dynamics of political power. Elizabeth Bohls argues

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1 A. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* B. Dobrée (ed.) (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1966 repr. 1986), 227.

2 M. Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London and New York. Routledge, 1995), 132.

3 A. Radcliffe, *The Italian* F. Garber (ed.) (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1968 repr. 1986), 158.

4 A. Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* A. Milbank (ed.) (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1993), 164.

that Radcliffe's 'treatment of the picturesque suggests the seductions of privilege that reconcile women to patriarchy.'[5] Radcliffe's romance plots lead young women from a position of vulnerable independence to the security of domestic subordination. When Radcliffean heroines look out of the windows of their prisons, their pleasure in picturesque composition offers the enticing prospect of masculine power over the environment instead of a position subordinate to the masculine sublime. In moments like these, Bohls suggests, Radcliffean heroines lean out and think of Italy so that by the end of the novel they will be able to lie back and think of England.[6]

In these framed moments of landscape pleasure, the sublime experience of terror or rupture is contained by the conventions of picturesque spectacle. Like Radcliffe's employment of the explained supernatural, her version of the picturesque imposes closure and order on the 'horrid' natural world.[7] The compatibility of gothic romance with picturesque composition is suggested in one of the earliest theoretical accounts of the relationship between male picturesque traveller and feminised nature. 'Is it a greater pleasure to the sportsman,' Gilpin asked, 'to pursue a trivial animal, than it is to the man of taste to pursue the beauties of nature? to follow her through all her recesses? to obtain a sudden glance, as she flits past him in some airy shape? to trace her through the mazes of the cover? to wind after her along the vale? or

5 E. A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1716-1818* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1995), 226.

6 These moments could be compared with the episodes when Wollstonecraft's Maria returns to her native village and forgets her sorrows in 'The picturesque form of several favourite trees, and the porches of rude cottages, with their smiling hedges'; or when, having taken off her wedding ring and announcing her intention to leave Venables, she opens the window of her locked room and enjoys the lustre of 'bright, picturesque sketches.' M. Wollstonecraft, *Mary* and *Maria*, with Mary Shelley, *Matilda* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 113; 121.

7 For further discussion of Radcliffe's use of the picturesque, see R. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester. Manchester University Press, 1995), 49-56 and notes. Miles assumes that the picturesque is inherently conservative, whereas I am arguing that its playful potential is suppressed by Radcliffean plots, but released by more 'open-ended' travel writing.

along the reaches of the river.'[8] Gilpin's strongly gendered reading of the landscape adds a nice twist to Bohls's suggestion that Radcliffean heroines escape from their powerlessness by turning to the elevated vantage point and manipulative visual strategies of male picturesque guides. The feminine quest for an authoritative masculine overview was literally the case for Radcliffe herself because, although many of her novels are set in Italy, she never visited the peninsula, viewing it wholly through paintings or literary texts such as Addison's and Brydone's tours.[9]

Although it was uninformed by personal experience, Radcliffe's view of Italy proved extremely influential. Almost twenty years after *The Italian* was published, Byron expected that his sister's opinion of Venice would be determined by Radcliffean gothic romance. 'I am going out this evening - in my *cloak & Gondola* - there are two nice Mrs. Radcliffe words for you' he wrote in December 1816.[10] In the same year, the artist Jane Waldie who had travelled to Italy wrote that 'fictitious narratives [give] a better idea of the peculiar characteristics of Italian scenery and Italian habits, than many more detailed and regular accounts.'[11]

This paper argues that picturesque landscape descriptions in travel writing by women who travelled across the peninsula produce subtly different effects from those of Radcliffe's gothic fiction. I'd like to focus on those women's responses to irregularity, unruliness, lawlessness, roughness - what David Punter calls 'resistant material' - all elements of the disorder which was needed to guarantee picturesque wholeness.[12] While Gilpin's guidelines flirted with the possibility of violence ('we

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8 W. Gilpin, *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty, on Picturesque Travel and on Sketching landscape to which is added a poem on landscape painting* (London. R. Blamire, 1792), 48.

9 Addison's Preface to the 2nd edn (1718) records Italy as a country of 'parts,' 'particularity' and 'variety.' He responds to a 'Romantic' scene, but not in detail, leaving poetic quotation to do the job of description.

10 L. A. Marchand (ed.) *Byron's Letters and Journals* 13 vols. (London. John Murray, 1976-94), V, 145.

11 Quoted in M. O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination* (Houndmills and London. Macmillan, 1998), 20.

12 D. Punter, 'The Picturesque and the Sublime: two worldscapes' in S. Copley and P. Garside (eds.) *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, landscape and aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1994 repr. 1995), 220-39.

must beat down [...] deface [...] and throw the mutilated members around in heaps') in order to unsettle the displeasing symmetry of Palladian architecture, how did those principles transfer to a place which was famous for ruffians, brigands, *banditti* and other manifestations of political and legislative disorder? Or, to put the question another way, 'How lawless is the Italian picturesque?'

Examination of travel writing from Italy - especially by women writers - suggests that their writing maintains an interest in disorder for its own sake, not as a part of some larger system of order.[13] In travel literature by some of the best known women travellers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, picturesque unruliness became a way of questioning the authority of English, masculine ways of looking.[14] In different ways these writers teased-out, and began to identify with, subordinate elements of the picturesque which male writers were more inclined to take for granted much as Dr. Johnson regarded Italy as something 'it is expected a man should see.'[15] In parallel with their interest in narrative and incidental disorder, women writers were also attracted by formal techniques which held the potential to disrupt unity of design and coherent system.

The picturesque was popularised in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a way of applying the principles of Italian painting to English landscape. In his influential guides to the tourist spots of Britain, William Gilpin invoked the landscapes of Salvator Rosa, Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin. Rosa was the 'roughest' of the three, producing figures of 'the *negative* kind; or marked with some trait of *greatness, wildness,* or *ferocity*.'[16] Gilpin felt that the view of his descent into

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13 John Whale follows Martin Price in focussing on the mobility and energy of the picturesque. See J. Whale, 'Romantics, explorers and Picturesque travellers' in Copley and Garside (eds.) *The Politics of the Picturesque,* 175-195.

14 The picturesque is described as a male way of seeing in James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture' 1800-1918* (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1993), 16. Buzard demonstrates how customary it was for a man to 'show' a woman picturesque views and Europe in general.

15 Boswell's Life of Johnson; quoted in J. Dussinger, 'Hester Piozzi, Italy and the Johnsonian Aether,' *South Central Review* 9.4 (1992), 46-58.

16 *Observations relative chiefly to picturesque beauty made in the year 1772 on several parts of England particularly the mountains and lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland* (3rd ed) 2 vols. (London. R. Blamire, 1792), II, 46. 'Negative' in this context means 'a picturesque appendage' something which simply adorns a scene.

Ullswater required 'Figures in long, folding draperies; gypsies; *banditti;* and soldiers' (II, 46) (although he recognised the gap between the aesthetic appeal of such figures and the sensations they would inspire in real life). Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, the 'second generation' of picturesque writers, also maintained an interest in managed disorder or accident, but these treatises were mainly designed for the improvement of the land or garden design not for the temporary appraisal of a tourist or traveller. It was, therefore, Gilpin's picturesque guide books as mediated through Radcliffean fiction which had most influence on the way Italy was perceived in the early nineteenth century.[17]

In picturesque aesthetics, unrestful or disturbing details were usually subdued to a harmonious whole by the colour wash and all the controlling effects of distances, perspectives, lights and shades which Henry Tilney marshalls in his lecture on the picturesque in *Northanger Abbey.* The residual potential of detail to disrupt was, however, one of the chief concerns of critics like Sir Joshua Reynolds, as he tried to uphold the standards of civic art in the grand style. Reynolds placed Salvator Rosa below the rank of a painter like Michaelangelo in the category of 'original or characteristical style.' Rosa was deemed to be 'irregular, wild, and incorrect,' yet 'marked with that spirit and firmness which characterises works of genius.'[18] In his correspondence with Gilpin, Reynolds also placed the picturesque below the grand style: 'variety of tints and forms is picturesque; but it must be remembered [...] that [...] uniformity of colour, and a long continuation of lines [...] produces grandeur.'[19]

The 'variety' licensed by the picturesque was expanded and developed by some of the female followers of Gilpin in their travels through Italy. Elizabeth Manwaring has suggested that the picturesque was of particular importance for women writers because they were used

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17 Kim Ian Michasiw draws attention to the differences between Gilpin and the 'second generation' picturesque writers in 'Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,' *Representations,* 38 (1992), 76-100.

18 R. R. Wark (ed.) Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art* (New Haven and London. Yale University Press, 1975), 85.

19 *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty,* 35.

to copying pictures as an appropriate feminine past time.[20] Knowledge of the Italian language was regarded as a particularly feminine accomplishment and, especially after De Staël's *Corinne* (1807), Italy was gendered a feminine country.[21] When women travelled to Italy, therefore, they were aware of traversing a country which had been aesthetically created, even over-determined in their image. This adds a complicating richness to the ways in which women writers refer to Italy as an Eden. Extending the archetypal rebel's view of Italy as a 'Paradise of Exiles,' they turn the picturesque ideal back against the cultural system which circumscribes it and them. Their challenges to both political and aesthetic systems may be seen firstly in the use of disruptive or disturbing detail, secondly in attention to transgressive elements in society and thirdly in the use of intertextuality as an aesthetic device which questions the authority of prior texts as they are incorporated in a new verbal texture.

Women were often credited with a less than perfect grasp of the whole by eighteenth-century male theoreticians. This overview easily tilts into the satirical caricature of women immersed in a realm of fragments, parts and mundane remnants. In July 1740 Horace Walpole and Thomas Gray wrote to Richard West, informing him of the imminent arrival of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to join Lady Pomfret and Lady Walpole in Florence where they were all staying:

> You have not been witness to the rhapsody of mystic nonsense which these two fair ones debate incessantly, and consequently cannot figure what must be the issue of this triple alliance: we have some idea of it. Only the coalition of prudery, debauchery, sentiment, history, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and metaphysics; all except the second, understood by halves, by quarters, or not at all (I, 172).[22]

Gilpin's theory of the picturesque follows this cultural expectation when he argues that feminised nature is too disparate: 'Picturesque composition

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20 *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England: A study Chiefly of the Influence of Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa on English Taste 1700-1800* (London. Frank Cass, 1925 repr. 1965), 171.

21 Piozzi questions this directly: 'I know not why our English people have such a notion of Italian effeminacy,' I, 130.

22 P. Toynbee and L. Whibley (eds.) *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray* 3 vols. (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1935). A selective edition of Gray's letters was published in 1775, and became a staple part of polite reading for the latter part of the eighteenth century.

consists in uniting in one whole a variety of parts'; nature 'is most defective in composition; and [she] *must* be a little assisted' so as to produce a harmonious whole.[23]

As Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Bohls have pointed out, in Reynolds's theory detail and accidentality were deemed to be imperfections of feminine nature which needed to be corrected by masculine intellect.[24] Negative perceptions of detail, according to Schor, 'are part of a larger semantic network, bounded on the one side by the *ornamental*, with its traditional connotations of effeminacy and decadence, and on the other, by the *everyday*, whose "prosiness" is rooted in the domestic sphere of social life presided over by women.'[25] These conditions are intensified in the trope of Italy as a ruined civilization, home of the baroque, and by the genre of travel writing which is episodic, fragmentary and preoccupied (where it intersects with the guide book) with routine matters of fact. But, as Schor suggests, there is 'no reliable body of evidence to suggest that women's art is either more or less particularistic than men's.[26] So what happens to the disruptive particulars which women writers incorporated in their versions of Italy? To investigate this question, I shall discuss specific passages from work by Hester Piozzi and Lady Morgan, and shall also draw in a more general way on travel writing by Marianne Baillie, Charlotte Eaton, Maria Graham and Mary Shelley.

Hester Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through Italy* (1789) intersperses descriptions of the landscape with details of domestic life.[27] As John Dussinger remarks, 'in contrast to Gray, Gilpin and West, Piozzi has a relatively loose aesthetic agenda.'[28] This looseness was noted as a stylistic flaw by Elizabeth Carter, who in 1789 enjoyed the book but said that she was sometimes put out of humour

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23 *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty,* 19; 67. Anne Bermingham suggests that 'the Picturesque was an aesthetic of the detail' in 'The Picturesque and ready-to-wear femininity,' in Copley and Garside (eds.) *The Politics of the Picturesque,* 82.

24 Bohls, 78.

25 N. Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York and London. Methuen, 1987), 4.

26 *Ibid.,* 97.

27 *Observations and Reflections made in the course of a journey through France, Italy and Germany* 2 vols. (London. Strathan & Cadell, 1798).

28 Dussinger, *South Central Review* 9.4 (1992), 46.

by Piozzi 'being so vexatiously desultory.' Having led her readers to something 'away she whisks [...] and leaves them staring and wondering what is become of her.'[29] Her rapid movement and turning between subjects intensifies the picturesque ideal of the vista suddenly disclosed and anticipates Byron's technique in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Cantos III and IV. Piozzi draws spectacular scenes, but her panoramic description of entry into Italy gives place to a more exacting record of how people live. The narrative begins with a gesture to Thomson's sublime description of mountain wolves 'Burning for blood; boney, and gaunt and grim' (I, 40), but the first volume ends with a scathing indictment of his description of dawn breaking: 'so charming Thomson wrote from his lodgings at a milliner's in Bond-Street, whence he seldom rose early enough to see the sun do more than glitter on the opposing windows of the street' (I, 416).

Like many of her contemporaries, Piozzi was intrigued by Italian women's devices for plaiting their hair. Women's hair in these travel accounts, as in other literary works, often functions synecdochially for feminised nature. Marianne Baillie gives a detailed account of the coils and knots of women's hair at San Germano, contrasting this with the 'flat and uninteresting landscape.'[30] Charlotte Eaton dwells on the way that the 'beautiful hair' of a novice 'was mercilessly severed from her head by the fatal shears of the sisters' (III, 183), while Lady Morgan notes that amidst the general slovenliness of Lombardy, younger females exhibit 'much classic taste in the braiding of their luxuriant tresses, sometimes confined by a glittering comb, and sometimes fastened by a silver bodkin' (I, 68).[31] The 'wanton' tresses associated with Milton's Eve and fallen woman are here reclaimed by feminine skill and artifice (we might

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29 *Letters from Mrs Elizabeth Carter to Mrs Montagu, between the years 1755 and 1800. Chiefly upon literary and moral subjects* 3 vols. (London. F., C. & J. Rivington, 1817), III, 314.

30 M. Baillie, *First Impressions of a tour upon the continent in the summer of 1818 through parts of France, Italy, Switzerland, the borders of Germany and a part of French Flanders* (London. John Murray, 1819), 173ff.

31 C. Eaton, *Rome in the Nineteenth Century containing a complete account of the ruins of the ancient city, the remains of the middle ages, and the monuments of modern times with remarks on the fine arts, on the state of society and on religious ceremonies, manners and customs of the modern Romans, in a series of letters written during a residence in Rome in the years 1817 and 1818* 3 vols. (Edinburgh. Ballantyne, 1820); Lady Morgan, *Italy* 2 vols. (London. Henry Colburn & Co., 1821).

compare this with Beatrice's hair escaping from its ties in Percy Shelley's *The Cenci*).[32]

Although John Dussinger sees the *Observations* as a competitive dialogue with Dr. Johnson, Piozzi's main intertextual interlocutor in this work is Milton. [33] Milton was a dominant presence for English writers in Italy not only because he lived there (Eaton envisages him '"At evening, on the top of Fiesole"' (I, 31)), but also because of Italy's association with the garden 'tending to wild' of *Paradise Lost*. Patrick Brydone's anthropological speculations about why childbirth seemed easier for Sicilian women, for example, were couched in Edenic terms: 'the curse that was laid upon mother Eve seems to be entirely taken off: I don't know how the ladies have deserved this exemption, as they have at least as much both of Eve and the serpent as ours have, and still retain their appetite, as strong as ever, for forbidden fruit.'[34]

Piozzi's references to Milton combine a dutiful respect with a more teasing sort of play. She borrows Milton's description of 'Zephyr with Aurora playing,' to describe Verona; she turns his phrase, 'gems which inlay the bosom of the deep' to describe a glass factory at Murato and, more subversively, she incorporates Milton's image of a 'Pensive nun' in a discussion of the uses of gondolas for what is euphemistically called 'relaxation' and 'gallantry' (I, 160). Finally, Piozzi uses Milton's description of Edenic lovers to capture the traveller's (and her) relationship with Venice: 'with thee conversing I forget all time' (I, 129; 170; 167). This gentle suggestion of limits overflowing expresses Piozzi's preoccupation throughout her work with laws and law breaking. Her concern to provide 'the whole picture' of Italian society means that the figures in the landscape are connected with details about social organisation, especially the prominent female presence in the public sphere (including literary clubs and medical schools). Italy is a paradox with a legacy of 'much despotic power' but 'very little oppression.' Piozzi's

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32 An interesting variation on the Italy as paradise myth is when Piozzi compares herself with Stephano in *The Tempest* (I, 47).

33 Dussinger argues that Piozzi 'seems to be carrying on a conversation with someone looking over her shoulder - and that presence is often unmistakably Johnson.' See *South Central Review* 9.4 (1992), 47.

34 P. Brydone, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta in a Series of Letters to William Beckford Esq.* 2 vols. (London. Strathan and Cadell, 1776), II, 80.

description of Italian women as 'a little riotous' (I, 110) has its correlative in her own testing of the authority of male commentators. And although she shows deference for Milton, Piozzi undercuts other male authorities.[35] Young, Moore and Addison are all upbraided as Piozzi uses a picturesque idiom to celebrate 'all the new ideas I have acquired since England lessened to my sight upon the sea (II, 66) and to distance herself from the totalising views of some male guides: 'one might as well hope to get a just view of nature by looking through a coloured glass, as to gain a true account of foreign countries by turning over pages dictated by prejudice' (II, 87).

In his essay on picturesque travel, Gilpin had decreed that 'the anatomical study of figures is not attended to: we regard them merely as the ornaments of scenes.'[36] Both male and female travel writers are capable of abandoning this distance and disinterest, but repeatedly it appears that women writers attend to the area of disruptive detail in ways which question patriarchal authority. In particular, the ornamental *banditti* of Gilpin's guidebooks and Radcliffe's novels are realised as members of society rather than craggy bits of nature. This is evident in Maria Graham's detailed account of bandit culture in her *Three Months Passed in the Mountains East of Rome during the year 1819*, Mary Shelley's attention to the *Carbonari* in her *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (1844), and Charlotte Eaton's fascination with the pensioned *banditti* at the castle St. Angelo.[37] My last case-study, however, is Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821).

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35 Moore and Young are corrected for disliking the Borghese Centaur which Piozzi found 'happily expressed in its way,' I, 433; Addison is rebuked for underestimating the library in Milan, I, 75.

36 *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty*, 44.

37 Graham's sympathy with the *banditti* is suggested in the way she likens them to heroes of the English liberal imagination: 'The *banditti* or *forusciti* of Italy are what the forest outlaws of England were in the days of Robin Hood,' 35. See E. H. Schor, 'Mary Shelley in Transit,' in A. A. Fisch, A. K. Mellor, E. H. Schor (eds.)*The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein* (New York and Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1993), 235-57; 249-50 where Schor argues that Shelley draws her reader into sympathy with the social landscape of Italy and, after censuring the violence of the *Carbonari* in the Preface, she voices revolutionary hope in the text. See also J. Moskal, 'Gender and Nationalism in Mary Shelley's Rambles in Germany and Italy,' *Romanticism*, 5.2 (1999), 188-201. Moskal argues that Mary Shelley steps between the 'contested ground' of Morgan's work and the other extreme of depoliticzed guidebooks, 190.

Throughout this work, Morgan specialises in setting up picturesque scenes, only to investigate and speculate upon details provoked by figures in the landscape. A description of picturesque figures at a grape harvest in Parma is interrupted by a digression on the miseries inflicted by absentee landlords in Ireland (I, 263); the falls of Terni, Byron's 'matchless cataract,' are tainted with despotism because the site has been privatised by the Pope (I, 164). Morgan frequently sketches scenes which demand 'a Byron's pen or a Salvator's pencil' only to juxtapose them with narratives of despotism.[38] The approach to Genoa offers 'a startling sensation of pleasure,' but almost the first thing that becomes visible on arrival is a group of galley slaves dragging marble:

> These wretched men had no dress but canvass trowsers and vest; their feet, legs, arms, and [...] heads, were bare! their bronzed skins were crimsoned up to their dripping brows; every sinew was starting, every nerve was strained, every vein swelled; their arms were folded on their stooped and panting breasts. (I, 220)

There could be no more obvious example of the way in which 'disgusting' detail unsettles the picturesque - we remember Reynolds's shudder over the detail of Bernini's David biting his lip which interrupts the dignity of the grand style and distracts the viewer with 'accident.'[39]

It is in her account of the *banditti* that Morgan most clearly unravels picturesque Italy. Patrick Brydone had described a place of execution in Sicily 'where the quarters of a number of robbers were hung up upon hooks, like so many hams' (II, 66). Morgan observes the same thing, but sees it as a questioning of the rest of the landscape: 'close by one [orange grove] rich in fruit and flowers, hung a gibbet with the limbs of some lately executed criminal tainting the gales that breathed odours of Arabia' (II, 328). Morgan's view of the *banditti* is directly linked with the failure of the Neapolitan uprising. She turns on those who rejoice in its failure, and then invites readers further and further into a picturesque scene:

> let them behold the well-known bandit, scowling at the door of that black dismantled shed, where he finds in his casual visit from the mountain, the brawling brood of famished imps [...] Let them

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38 'If power should never be trusted to a man, least of all should it be given to him who arrogates a divine mission,' I, 286.

39 'This expression is far from being general, and still farther from being dignified. He might have seen it in an instance or two; and he mistook accident for generality,' Discourse IV.

> see that brood, destined to beggary or to their father's trade, disfigured by dirt and rags, issuing forth at the noise of a carriage wheel, throwing themselves under the horse's feet to excite compassion [...] Let them view that listless vicious mother, with her look of sagacity sharpened by want, handsome in spite of filth, but the more terrible for her beauty, lying at her door in utter idleness, the knife perhaps still reeking, which her husband has plied too successfully within view of the gibbet of the orange-groves of Fondi.

Morgan's panorama takes the viewer into the lives and hearts of the figures in the foreground and back to those dismembered limbs which taint the garden paradise. The *banditti* are 'unawed or unpunished by the paternal governments of these countries,' enacting the defiant survival she wanted for her own work (savaged by the Tory reviewers at home and banned by the Papal and Austrian authorities in Italy).

Morgan's politicization of the picturesque is evident in the banned *Italy*, but it also appears, perhaps unexpectedly, in her later work, *The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa* (1824). She values Gilpin's picturesque archetype for his 'moral independence and political principle.' 'I found Salvator Rosa,' she said, 'standing in the gap of time between Michael Angelo the patriot artist, and Filicaja the poet of Liberty.'[40] Closely identifying Rosa with his painterly subjects, Morgan's revisionist biography also claims that 'there is no doubt' that 'he did for some time live among the picturesque outlaws, whose portraits he has multiplied' (I, 108) and she celebrates the *banditti* of the Abruzzi and Calabria, 'beings full of the restless energy and uncompromising independence which form the moral attributes of mountain regions.'

The *banditti*, of course, figure her own struggle as a woman writer and in this respect, one of the most revealing portions of her biography describes an engraving:

> In the midst of rocky scenery appears a group of *banditti*, armed at all points, and with all sorts of arms. They are lying, in careless attitudes but with fierce watchfulness, round a youthful prisoner, who forms the foreground figure, and is seated on a rock, with languid limbs hanging over the precipice, which may be supposed to yawn beneath. It is impossible to describe the despair depicted

40 *The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa* 2 vols. (London. Henry Colburn, 1824), I, vi.

> in this figure: it is marked in his position, in the droop of his head, which his nerveless arms seem with difficulty to support, and in the little that may be seen of his face, over which, from his recumbent attitude, his hair falls in luxuriant profusion (and the singular head and tresses of Salvator are never to be mistaken). All alike is destitute of energy and of hope, which the fierce beings grouped around the captive, seem, in some sentence recently pronounced, to have banished forever. Yet one there is who watches over the fate of the young victim: a woman stands immediately behind him. Her hand stretched out, its forefinger resting on his head, marks him as the subject of a discourse which she addresses to the listening bandits. Her figure, which is erect, is composed of those bold, straight lines, which in art and nature constitute the *grand*. Even the fantastic cap or turban, from which her long dishevelled hair has escaped, has no curve of grace; and her drapery partakes of the same rigid forms. Her countenance is full of stern melancholy - the natural character of one whose feelings and habits are at variance, whose strong passions may have flung her out of the pale of society, but whose feminine sympathies still remain unchanged. She is artfully pleading for the life of the youth, by contemptuously noting his insignificance. But she commands while she soothes. She is evidently the mistress, or the wife of the chief, in whose absence an act of vulgar violence may be meditated. The youth's life is saved: for that cause rarely fails to which a woman brings the omnipotence of her feelings. (I, 117-19).[41]

It is a remarkable reading of a picture which recovers Salvator Rosa from the secondary league of picturesque variety and reclassifies him as an exponent of the grand style. But it is a grand style with a difference: the artful authority of a female *improvisatrice* draws attention to resistant material, to the recalcitrant physical domain. Whereas Gilpin's picturesque rules contained and subsumed the unruly and irregular tokens of the Italianate, women writers in Italy - in different ways - reanimated the instability of picturesque combinations.[42] Or, as Lady Morgan saw

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41 This engraving is identified in J. Scott, *Salvator Rosa: His Life and Times* (New Haven and London. Yale University Press, 1995), 113ff.

42 See M. Price, 'The Picturesque Movement' in F. W. Hilles and H. Bloom (eds.) *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle* (New York. Oxford University Press, 1965), 259-92. Price describes the picturesque as a 'phase of speculation,' incorporating 'a degree of arbitrariness and playfulness,' 262. He notes that the sense of play is a product of associative processes and a skeptical double awareness of external nature and the mind's art: 'the sense of play finds exercise /cont...

Salvator Rosa's achievement, they 'dispelled the splendid but "unreal mockery" of elements always genial, and nature always undisturbed' (I, 298).

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/cont. both in fancifulness and in those acts of abstraction which call attention to the arbitrariness of all the mind's creations,' 272. He also emphasises the picturesque as a mixed genre: 'the drama of the picturesque achieves neither the full tragedy of the sublime nor the serene comedy of the beautiful,' 277. The full range of different approaches to Italy by women travel writers needs a book-length study to do it (and them) justice.

'All that I have dreamed and more':[1] Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Florence

Alison Chapman

Following their famous and audacious elopement, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett headed for the mild climate of Pisa in October 1846. There, EBB rested from the physical rigours of her journey and the psychological trauma of abandoning her siblings to their tyrannical father. The Brownings soon, however, found Pisa and its society intolerably dull. More to the point, they discovered that their landlord had cheated and slandered them (he alleged EBB to be 'unladylike'). EBB comments in a letter to her sister Henrietta: 'Cheating is systemized in Italy to a most frightful extent; and nobody sees any harm in what everybody does. Foreigners are considered the lawful prey of the nation.'[2] Florence was cheaper and livelier and so, in April 1847, they engaged a *coupé* for the journey, which EBB spent mostly lying, shaken and exhausted, over Robert's knees. She still managed to see tantalising glimpses of the countryside and a fleeting glance at Florence as the carriage sped through:

> the country with vine-festooned plains and breaks of valley and hill — ridges of mountain and sweeps of river — was far more beautiful than I expected between Pisa and Florence. As to Florence I could see it only in our rapid passage to the hotel, across one of the bridges of our old dear yellow Arno; and when Robert had carried me into the *Hôtel du Nord* and laid me down on the sofa, I could only wait for coffee and dream of being in the city of the Medici.[3]

It was to be 15 May before EBB felt strong enough to venture outside, but even then EBB was only permitted a brief glance at the city. She tells Henrietta:

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1 C. Fenimore Woolson on Florence, cited in C. Hibbert, *Florence: The Biography of a City* (London, 1994), 260.

2 A letter signed Ba to Henrietta, 31 March 1847, in L. Huxley (ed.) *Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Letters to her Sister, 1846-1859* (London, 1929), 16.

3 *Ibid,* 19f. Murray's Handbook describes the *Hôtel du Nord* as 'a small clean hotel.' See *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (3rd ed.) (London, 1847), 474.

> [E]very glimpse I catch of Florence makes me more eager to see all. Oh, this cathedral! so grand it is, with its pile of tessellated Domes — the massiveness glorified with various marbles — the porphyry crossed with the dim green serpentine — the white and black heightening and deepening one another. Think of a mountainous marble Dome, veined with inlaid marbles — marble running through marble: like a mountain for size, like a mosaic for curious art — rivers of colour inter-flowing, but all dimly. But you will tire of descriptions of travellers, and I shall keep mine for the printing press and yawning readers — 'my great work' as Arabel says encouragingly.[4]

This narrative of the Brownings' beginning in the city that was to become the main residence of their marriage is telling. Although EBB wishes to see the whole of Florence and not just tantalising glimpses, her subsequent letters and poetry written about the city make clear that Florence is only ever accessible in parts. Indeed, EBB's description of the Duomo's marbled exterior provides us with a figure for reading her representations of Florence: 'like a mountain for size, like a mosaic for curious art.' The Duomo, she mentions in another letter to Mr Boyd, 'struck me with a sense of the sublime in architecture [...]. It seemed to carry its theology out with it; it signified more than a mere building.'[5] But this sense of the ineffable sublime is juxtaposed with tiny details of the black, white, green and yellow marbles which make up the mosaic. The combination of grandeur with detail — traditionally characterised as the Burkean sublime and beautiful — merge by virtue of the 'rivers of colour inter-flowing.' The large and wondrous scale and the small material particulars inter-blend in the trope of the river.

The Brownings in Florence were one centre of a lively British and American expatriate community made up of disparate intellectual and social groups whose members changed with the seasons. The original purpose of my research into the community was to map its social geography, in particular, how the expatriates relate to their environment and its politics. The more I read, however, the more it became apparent

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4 *Letters to Her Sister*, 27.

5 Cited in P. Lubbock, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning in Her Letters* (London, 1906). It is worth noting that Lubbock disparages EBB's aesthetic sensibility, 225f. See Murray's *Handbook* for a description of the Duomo as an intermediary style: 'a mean between the pointed and ancient style,' 483. For a historical account of the building of the Duomo, consult R. King, *Brunelleschi's Dome* (London, 2000).

that their own written depictions of life in Florence represent the city in an ambivalent way. Florence was not accessible and knowable, nor was it, for that matter, wholly alien or foreign. It seemed, then, that a recovery of the Anglo-American expatriate community in Florence must in turn be inflected by these representations. It should not of course be surprising that Italy is not accessible either to the mid-nineteenth century expatriate or to the cultural historian. In western European rhetorical tradition, Italy is a symbolic text reached only in figure and only in quotation. In particular, it is conventional to ascribe to Rome the nineteenth-century allure of Italy as a decaying space, signifying, as it did for Freud, memories of lost civilisation. As Hilary Fraser argues in her excellent study *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*, Rome for the Victorians was depicted as a sarcophagus, a figurative repository for all things decaying and corrupt.[6] Marjorie Garber comments that Rome is so excessively figured that its very reality becomes inaccessible: 'if it is true that all roads lead to Rome, that is because they never get there.'[7]

While 'tropes of Italy proliferated like flowers in Fiesole,' Sandra M. Gilbert notes, Italian nationalists feared that their country would have no reality except as a figure. 'English-speaking poets and novelists read the sunny, ruin-haunted Italian landscape as a symbolic text, a hieroglyph, or, perhaps more accurately, a palimpsest of western history, whose warring traces seemed to them to solidify in the stones of Venice and the bones of Rome.'[8] Indeed, there was alarm that the historical reality of Italy and its tumultuous politics would be not only overshadowed but also de-animated by the aesthetic re-writing. In her study of women and Italy in the nineteenth-century, Gilbert argues that Italy, and specifically Florence, provides Elizabeth Barrett Browning with a utopian and maternal homeland which rejuvenates her creatively, emotionally and physically. Its beneficial warm climate, musical language, idealist politics of unification, represents a feminine plenitude and *jouissance* which brings about her own *risorgimento*. Gilbert argues that EBB, like Christina Rossetti, transforms Italy 'from a political state to a female state of mind,'[9]

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6 H. Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Rome* (Oxford, 1992).

7 M. Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (New York, 1987).

8 S. M. Gilbert, 'From *Patria* to *Matria*: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Risorgimento,' in A. Leighton (ed.) *Victorian Women Poets: A Critical Reader* (Oxford, 1996), 27.

9 *Ibid*, 28.

a 'utopian motherland [...] annihilating national and sexual differences.'[10] After thus setting up *patria* as the opposite to *matria*, Gilbert has to conclude that EBB's rhetorical use of Italy must fail because 'she was [metaphorically] chained [...] to the rock of patriarchal Rome.'[11] The utopia of Italy as a motherland cannot transcend either the rigid north or patriarchal politics.

When applied specifically to Florence, however, Gilbert's analysis is problematical. Not only does it displace EBB's deeply ingrained commitment to the cause of the Tuscan nationalists, but it also sets up a false dichotomy between the maternal aesthetic of Italy and its political patriarchal realities. Rather, the dynamics of Florence as figure emerges as an interrelation between materialist details and the ineffable, the beautiful and the sublime, hallucination and the experiential, utopia and reality. Such representations are not confined to EBB's letters and poetry. In his *Pictures from Italy* (1846), for example, Dickens in one chapter gives 'a rapid diorama' that takes in his picturesque impressions of Florence. He depicts the view to Florence from one of the surrounding hills (not specified) as a 'heap' of luminous details in which object and image are oddly blurred:

> See where [Florence] lies before us in a sun-lighted valley, bright with the winding Arno, and shut in by swelling hills; its domes, and towers, and palaces, rising from the rich country in a glittering heap, and shining in the sun like gold!
>
> Magnificently stern and sombre are the streets of beautiful Florence; and the strong old piles of building make such heaps of shadow, on the ground and in the river, that there is another and a different city of rich forms and fancies, always lying at our feet.[12]

In 1847, EBB writes to Mr Boyd with a similar description, almost certainly haunted by her reading of Dickens:

> Florence is beautiful, as I have said before, and must say again and again, most beautiful. The river rushes through the midst of its palaces like a crystal arrow, and it is hard to tell, when you see all by the clear sunset, whether those churches, and houses, and windows, and bridges, and people walking, in the water or out of the water, are the real walls, and windows, and bridges, and people, and churches.[13]

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10 *Ibid,* 31.
11 *Ibid,* 50.
12 Charles Dickens, *Pictures From Italy*, K. Flint (ed.) (London, 1998), 183f.
13 *EBB in her Letters*, 226.

In this representation of the city, EBB borrows from Dickens's use of the list as a heap of things with two important rhetorical changes. Her litany of churches, houses, windows, bridges, and people is repeated at the end of the sentence as a chiasmus, or crossing over, and hyperbole, or throwing beyond. As W. David Shaw notes, the chiasmus involves a heroic crossing which defies rational logic, a jump between knowledge and ignorance in a rhetorical sleight of hand.[14] Chiasmus is a 'cross trope' more typical of Robert Browning than his wife; indeed, it is behind his notorious advice to Ruskin to leap over the craggy gaps of meaning in his obscure *Sordello*. Chiasmus is the bridge over the unknowable. For EBB, the details of her visual representation of Florence expose and also leap over the ineffable, the distinction between object and image or shadow.[15] Her description also deploys hyperbole in the excessive and climactic listing of things seen. As Chloe Chard comments, hyperbole in travel narrative plays on its etymological origins of throwing beyond. It is a figure of excess, of the crossing of limits.[16] EBB's use of hyperbole relies upon mundane material details, a list of nouns, to suggest that the vision surpasses representation. Florence is thus accessed in a problematical double vision which attempts a purchase on the city as a temporal, experiential reality, as material and tangible, and yet also as hallucinatory, ineffable, unrepresentable.[17] Such a double vision is explicitly defined by Aurora Leigh several years later:

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14 W. D. Shaw, *Victorians and Mystery: Crises of Representation* (Ithaca, 1990), 252.

15 In an unpublished letter to Isa Blagden, EBB relates a dream which expresses Italy as a woman just beyond her grasp: 'I dreamed lately that I followed a mystic woman down a long suite of palatial rooms. She was in white, with a white mask, on her head the likeness of a crown. I knew she was Italy, but I couldn't see through the mask.' Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, letter 159. By permission of the syndics of the Museum to whom rights in this publication are assigned.

16 C. Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography 1600-1830* (Manchester, 1999), 5.

17 Here I differ from Angela Leighton's description of EBB's double-vision, which she ascribes to 'heartless laughing and heartfelt sighing, as false and true, artful and conscience-ridden.' Leighton's analysis of EBB's poetry de-politicises her aesthetic and over-states her rejection of De Staël's *Corinne* (which Leighton reads as apolitical). See *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (Hemel Hempstead, 1992), 117.

> But poets should
> Exert a double vision; should have eyes
> To see near things as comprehensively
> As if afar they took their point of sight,
> And distant things as intimately deep
> As if they touched them. Let us strive for this.
> (V.183-188)[18]

EBB's description of Florence in *Casa Guidi Windows* suggests that it is the 'dear old yellow Arno' which focuses and also bears the double vision. As in the description of the Duomo, with its 'rivers of colour inter-flowing,' the figure of the river blends the material with the ineffable, the beautiful with the sublime. In EBB's descriptions of civic Florentine life, furthermore, the river is a trope which also denotes circulation, communication, freedom of expression and mediation at a time when the very values of a free press in both England and Tuscany were threatened through censorship and ideology.[19]

EBB's *Casa Guidi Windows* was published in 1851. The first part documents a personal response to witnessing, from the windows of the family home, Tuscan celebrations of what they took to be impending liberty. Florence was granted its own civil guard by the Austrian Grand Duke Leopold II on 12 September 1847, which was also the date of the Brownings' first wedding anniversary. Towards the start of the poem — which is part epistle, part travelogue, part fragmented impression — there is a description of the Arno which explicitly links the creative process with the river's movement:

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18 In her edition of the poem, Margaret Reynolds notes that this passage should be compared with Robert Browning's definition of the objective poet, in his essay on Shelley (1852), as having a 'double faculty' of seeing external objects widely as well as narrowly. See *Aurora Leigh*, M. Reynolds (ed.) (New York, 1996), 148 n. 3. All quotations from the poem are taken from this edition.

19 See in particular EBB's letters from this period which repeatedly fulminate against the London *Times*. Murray's description of the Arno emphasises its unpredictable energy: 'Modern Florence forms an irregular pentagon, unequally divided by the Arno, now shallow and sluggish, now swelling, and rushing down from the mountains with irresistible fury,' 478. This description is repeated a few pages later: 'The portion of the river within the city is crossed by four bridges, all of which at various times have suffered more or less ruin from the river's fury. The Arno, generally so placid and low, is fed by mountain torrents: and occasionally swells in the course of a few hours to a most extraordinary height, inundating the adjacent parts of the city, and bearing down all obstacles before it,' 480. The Arno most recently burst its banks, with tragic and disastrous consequences, on 3 November 1966.

I can but muse in hope before this shore
Of golden Arno as it shoots away
Through Florence' heart beneath her bridges four!
Bent bridges, seeming to strain off like bows,
And tremble while the arrowy undertide
Shoots on and cleaves the marble as it goes,
And strikes up palace-walls on either side,
And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,
With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,
And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,
By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out
From any lattice there, the same would fall
Into the river underneath no doubt,
It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.
How beautiful! the mountains from without
In silence listen for the word said next.[20]

The 'golden Arno' is depicted as the blood to Florence's civic heart, pumping and 'shooting' as an arrow. The 'crystal arrow' of the river, as EBB described it in a letter cited earlier, both reflects the poetic musings and also is a figure for the dynamic process of poetic creativity. In its swift flow, it embraces the sides of the bridges and the *palazzi*, but, crucially, it also reflects, incorporates, fragments and multiplies the city's doors, windows, terraces, and gazers. The Arno's course also catches up flowers or kerchiefs thrown from windows as part of the Tuscan celebrations, carrying with it also the surge towards liberty and national independence. This passage has often been taken by critics to express EBB's associationist view of poetry, but the passage also does something more. It figures the Arno and the poetry which it describes as refracting its images, dispersing and multiplying them, but also communicating, carrying and expressing the image.[21] Furthermore, the penultimate lines of the description suggest that the mountains are not just waiting to hear the sounds of the celebrating crowd, but also listen in silence for the meaning both reflected and produced by the river. Indeed, the 'word said next' is precisely the non-verbal signs signified by the flowers and the

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20 The text of all poems cited in this article, other than *Aurora Leigh*, is taken from *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (Oxford, 1932).

21 For a comparison of this process to recent developments in optical technology, in particular the stereoscope and daguerreotype, see H. Groth, 'A Different Look: Visual Technologies and the Making of History in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows*,' *Textual Practice*, 14 (1) 2000, 31-52. Groth argues, however, that the Arno does not represent poetic vision, which instead EBB depicts as an ordered perspective.

kerchief cast down from windows in celebration. The Arno, while being a figure for mediation, communication, flow and liberty, also represents pure denotation, the ineffable, suggested by the mundane details of what is both reflected in it and carried along by its taught shooting currents. Steve Dillon and Katherine Frank argue that the whole of Part One of *Casa Guidi Windows* is concerned with free-flowing circulation, and that the Arno is described as a figure for hallucinatory and spontaneous poetry.[22] Crucially, however, the river focuses and bears or carries the double vision of both material detail and the ineffable dream as it becomes a trope for the meaning process it is part of. Later, in her verse-novel *Aurora Leigh* (published 1856), the Arno is located as the river where Pan harvested his reed (symbol for EBB of post-Romantic poetics), which 'sucked the stream for ages [to] get green' (VII.940).

Chloe Chard terms the activity of mapping and delimiting the fantasmatic *mise-en-scène* of foreignness 'imaginative geography.' Mapping a scene of foreignness, she argues, projects desires into a privileged space which traditionally, in travel writing, defeats attempts at visual representation. Imaginative geographies transgress boundaries of knowledge and systems of power, embracing for the Romantics the disruptive, dangerous and destabilising other.[23] The association of mapping with crossing limits is encoded into the response of many Victorian women poets who represent Italy as inherently a fluid space. Frances Anne Kemble's 'Farewell to Italy,' describing her departure by boat, looks back on Italy from the sea as 'a melting boundary 'twixt earth and sky.' Alice Meynell's 'The Watershed' describes a journey from the Alps into Italy as 'unfolding [the] South': 'The travelling heart went free/ With endless streams' 'I flowed to Italy.'[24]

As she prepares for her journey to her homeland of Tuscany, Aurora compares the cold north to a stiff mould and the south to fluidity and energy: 'My soul's in haste to leap up to the sun' (VI.305). For Aurora, poetry too must give priority to spirit above form: 'What form is best for poems? Let me think/Of forms less, and the external. Trust the spirit,/As

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22 S. Dillon and K. Frank, 'Defenestrations of the Eye: Flow, Fire, and Sacrifice in *Casa Guidi Windows*,' *Victorian Poetry*, 35.4 (Winter 1997).

23 Chard 10. The term 'mapping' is taken from Christian Jacob. See 10 n. 30.

24 A. Leighton and M. Reynolds (eds) *Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology* (Oxford, 1995), 552.

sovran nature does, to make the form' (V.223-5). Aurora's personal mapping of Florence is described in terms of the panoramic view from her villa in Bellosguardo. The valley of the Arno is seen, from her stance of 'double-observation' to be 'holding as a hand/The outspread city' (VII.518-19). The view is both material and ineffable: the sunrise and sunset 'Were magnified before us in the pure/Illimitable space and pause of sky.' The olive-trees have a 'mystic floating grey' and yet are also interrupted with the green of the maize and vine and further made concrete by the 'abrupt black line' of the cypresses which 'sign' the way to the city. But it is, yet again, the Arno, which holds both the description and the city together, 'trailing like a silver cord/Through all,' in a description which repeats her earlier account of the heaped up parts of the city:

> Beautiful
> The city lies along the ample vale,
> Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and street,
> The river trailing like a silver cord
> Through all, and curling loosely, both before
> And after, over the whole stretch of land
> Sown whitely up and down its opposite slopes
> With farms and villas. (VII.534-41)

As a figure for the poetic process overlaid with the desire for Italian national liberation, the Arno has a fluidity that also comes with a painful sense of dislocation from the scene described (also evident in Part Two of *Casa Guidi Windows* when the speaker recognises her false impression of politics from the removed vantage point of her window). EBB's most significant precursor of a woman artist embedded within but also removed from the civic life of Florence is Madame de Staël's Corinne, who goes to Florence to die of a broken heart following Oswald's betrayal and the loss of her improvising powers. Corinne gleans no comfort from her sense of removal from the bustle of the *piazza*: 'The active, busy look of the town's inhabitants surprised Corinne. Since she no longer had any interest in life, she could not imagine what made people walk on, come back, and hurry. As she slowly dragged her feet over the broad stone pavements of Florence, she would forget the idea of arriving, no longer remembering where she had intended to go.'[25]

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25 Madame de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. S. Raphael (1807 repr. Oxford, 1998), 352.

EBB's *Aurora Leigh*, composed after *Casa Guidi Windows* which stands in many respects as its preface, makes the painful estrangement felt by Corinne creatively and politically fruitful. In her description of her evening walk, Aurora depicts herself as a disembodied ghost who, precisely because she is dislocated from the scene, can see it in a double yet focused vision:

> And many a Tuscan eve I wandered down
> The cypress alley like a restless ghost
> That tries its feeble ineffectual breath
> Upon its own charred funeral-brands put out
> Too soon, where black and stiff stood up the trees
> Against the broad vermilion of the skies.
> Such skies! — all clouds abolished in a sweep
> Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to ghosts and men,
> As down I went, saluting on the bridge
> The hem of such before 'twas caught away
> Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Underneath,
> The river, just escaping from the weight
> Of that intolerable glory, ran
> In acquiescent shadow murmurously. (VII.1160-73)

It is significant that Aurora is on the bridge over the Arno where she juxtaposes the illimitable skies with the murmuring reality of the flow of water. She notes, some lines later, that 'I could not lose a sunset on the bridge' (VII.1274). As a symbol for communication, crossing over (chiasmus), and mediating, the bridge also figures Aurora the poet, ghostly, deanimated, and dispossessed in a land half-foreign to her, which makes her 'foreign to myself' (VII. 1215) and yet also seeing and experiencing movement, liberty and fluidity: 'It's sublime,/This perfect solitude of foreign lands!' (VII.1193-4). Significantly, she reconfigures this freedom as one of power, liberty and agency:

> possess, yourself,
> A new world all alive with creatures new,
> New sun, new moon, new flowers, new people — ah,
> To be possessed by none of them!
> [...]
> Such most surprising riddance of one's life
> Comes next one's death; 'tis disembodiment
> Without the pang. (VII.1200-3, 1209-13)

This ghosting of the self transforms the fears of Italian nationalists — that the excessive figuring of Italy by foreigners would deanimate the nation — into a celebration of freedom from possession, influence and, implicitly, tyranny. In her mapping of the civic life of Florence, EBB's

magnetic pull to the Arno represents for her a reconfiguration of agency and power. Dislocated and disembodied from the scene, both the narrators of *Casa Guidi Windows* and *Aurora Leigh* acquire a double vision which incorporates the material and the ineffable, the political reality and the desire for nationhood. As both tangible and unrepresentable, furthermore, Florence represents the woman artist striving to fuse aesthetics with politics. It is in the troping of the Arno, however, which most compellingly expresses both the poetic and political as a dynamic process and, more specifically, a feminisation of power as fluid, transgressive, and liberating.

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Shelley's Perception of Italian Art

Lilla Maria Crisafulli

I realize that the title of my essay, despite its seeming plainness, is actually somewhat ambiguous. 'Shelley's Perception of Italian Art' conveys an inner contradiction, suggesting, on the one hand, a theme that is all too well known – the relationship between the Romantic poet and Italy – while hinting, on the other hand, at something that has not been so widely explored by the critics, namely the relationship between Shelley and the arts. And one might ask whether, in any case, it is relevant to explore such a relationship: in other words, did Italian painting, dance, music, architecture or sculpture really contribute to Shelley's aesthetic ideas and poetic theory, or was Shelley's perception of them simply the consequence of an already formulated poetical theory? I am not going to supply answers to all of this but will simply try to focus my attention on some of the poet's experiences, without hazarding any final conclusions.

Still, the more I analyse the phrase 'Italian art,' the more tantalising I find it. What did 'Italian art' include at the beginning of the nineteenth century? It would have been easier to say what it did *not* include. To the eager eyes of the foreign traveller Italy embodied the arts themselves, or – much the same thing – their most complete manifestation. For centuries, to the enchanted northern visitors who swarmed through the peninsula, Italy represented both a promise and a realization; to them the Mediterranean country was the place where they expected to meet and understand the very secrets of beauty as well as its sources: Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Winckelmann, Goethe, Madame de Staël, Lady Morgan or Stendhal, all believed in the 'grand tour,' as it was to be called, as a touchstone to their aesthetic quest. Italy was an empowering experience whose effects enriched the intellect and released the imagination, a place where art, like nature, was offered in an extraordinary exhibition of richness and variety: from painting to sculpture, from archaeology to architecture, from drama to poetry, from ballet to music, everything was there to satisfy the visitor's cultural appetite.

All of this, however, came to the traveller in chaotic and disturbing profusion; works produced by ancient ages and peoples – Etruscar Roman, Greek or Byzantine - were lined up together with those create in more recent times and by later generations: medieval, renaissanc modern. Here was a crazy multitude of ghosts simultaneously speak

different languages and praying to different gods, a tower of Babel to the ear and to the eye. In this regard, in an article entitled 'Modern Italy,' published in 1829 in the *Westminster Review*, Mary Shelley observed that

> The confused mixture of monuments of all ages disturbs the imagination [...]. No line of demarcation is drawn between such dissimilar objects, and yet there is no affinity between them. Modern Rome is the lineal descendant of the ancient city, yet it is impossible to trace the slightest likeness of one to the other; and they form a contrast rendered more striking by their being forcibly brought into comparison. Paganism and Christianity were not more hostile in the days of Julian the Apostate, than is now the spirit breathed from the works of art, children of various eras, that strew the area, which the walls of Rome inclosed.[1]

Percy Bysshe would overcome this clashing juxtaposition between the modern and the ancient Italian cities by taking his inspiring walks at night, when the light of the moon would give new life to the antiquities while erasing the interfering shape of modernity.

Shelley arrived in Italy at a particularly favourable time, in March 1818, three years after the re-opening of the frontiers. The country had been off limits to British tourists from 1799 to 1815, and whoever tried to break through the barriers, hoping in a temporary truce, paid a high price, as in the case of Joseph Forsyth, the author of *On Antiquities, Arts and Letters in Italy* (one of Shelley's favourite guide books, together with Eustace's *A Classical Tour through Italy* (1815), Winckelmann *Geschichte der Kunst des Altherthums (Histoire de l'art ches les Ancients,* 1798, 1764), and, in a different way, Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature,* translated 1815). Forsyth, a devotee of the study of the Greek and Roman classics, arrived in Italy after the Amiens peace treaty, only to be arrested by the French on his return journey through Switzerland in 1803, and imprisoned for eleven years. His book, written during his confinement, was a brave attempt to convince the Napoleonic jury to free him on the basis of his 'classicità e italianità,' an attempt which failed so that poor Forsyth had to wait until 1814 for his freedom, only to die a year later.

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1 *The Mary Shelley Reader containing Frankenstein, Mathilda, Tales and Stories, Essays and Reviews, and Letters* B. T. Bennett & C. E. Robinson (eds.) (Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1990), 359.

The reopening of the borders was so welcome that an endless number of visitors wanted to benefit from this opportunity, in such large numbers as to displease the more unorthodox travellers. Byron's comments on his travelling countrymen are well known: 'this tribe of wretches;' Rome is 'pestilent with English.' An attitude that never changed, if we credit Shelley's letters to Mary in 1821 when, looking for a city where Byron and his exiled companion, Countess Guiccioli, could stay, he carefully avoided places where too many English people lived.[2] Shelley himself in Rome, in 1819, observes: 'The manners of the rich English are something wholly insupportable, & they assume pretences which they would not venture upon in their own country.'[3]

Both Byron and Shelley were going through a process of 'absorption' of Italy, as many British intellectuals had done before them;[4] in many ways they had become what Mary Shelley would define in 1823 as 'the new sect of Anglo-Italians.' In an article published in the third issue of *The Liberal*, called 'The English in Italy,' she stated:

> The preference accorded to Italy by the greater part of the emigrant English has given rise to a new race or sect among our countrymen, who have lately been dubbed Anglo-Italian. The Anglo-Italian has many peculiar marks which distinguish him from the mere traveller, or true John Bull. First he understands Italian, [...] the record of his travels is no longer confined, according to Lord Normanby's vivid description (in *The English in Italy*) to how he had been "starved here, upset there, and robbed every where." Your Anglo-Italian ceases to visit the churches and palaces, guide-book in hand; anxious, not to see, but to say that he has seen. Without attempting to adopt the customs of the natives [...]; he has lost the critical mania in a real taste for the beautiful, acquired by a frequent sight of the best models of ancient and modern art. Upon the whole, the Anglo-Italians may be pronounced a well-informed, clever, and active race; they pity greatly those of their un-Italianized countrymen [...] and in compassion of their narrow experience

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2 On the Romantic travellers' reaction to Italy and to Rome in particular see T. Webb's article "'City of the Soul": English Romantic Travellers in Rome' in *Imagining Rome – British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century* M. Liversidge and C. Edwards (eds.) (Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery in association with Merrell Holberton Publishers, London, 1996), 20–37.

3 *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* 2 vols. (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1964), 94.

4 On Shelley's intense response to Italy see Toni Cerutti '"Absorbing Italy": note sull' italianità di Shelley' in *Shelley e l'Italia* L. M. Crisafulli (ed.) (Napoli. Liguori Editore, 1998), 299–309.

> have erected a literature calculated to disseminate among them a portion of that taste and knowledge acquired in the Peninsula. Lord Byron may be considered the father of the Anglo-Italian literature, and Beppo as being the first product of that school.[5]

Shelley, as a true member of this new race, arrived in Italy with a thousand expectations and hopes accumulated during the many years spent reading the classics and the Italian medieval and renaissance writers, and indeed during his stay he produced literary works that cannot be read without continuous reference to Italy. On his arrival, the Cathedral of Milan offered him a first example of the grand Italian architecture:

> This Cathedral is a most astonishing work of art. It is built of white marble & and cut into pinnacles of immense height & the utmost delicacy of workmanship, & loaded with sculpture [...] is beyond anything I had imagined architecture capable of producing [...]. There is one solitary spot among these aisles behind the altar where the light of day is dim & yellow under the storied window which I have chosen to visit & read Dante there.[6]

His reading of Dante inside the cathedral demonstrates very significantly how resolute he was in attempting to reach, as he will say in *A Defence*, 'a harmony of the union of all.'[7] Shelley was perceiving a mutual relationship between literature and its sister arts, or, in this case, between the medieval text and the gothic church as if, through a mysterious process of symbiosis, the mind that had created the building could help the reader get closer to the mind that had produced the written work, and *vice versa*.

This view of inner correspondences among the arts and between them and other social or human achievements, or indeed between the past and the modern world, would be cultivated to perfection, through the articulation of an organic theory of art which the poet would achieve in *A Defence of Poetry*, years later. The opera in Milan also helped him in his journey toward a sense of unity. Salvatore Viganò's ballet and his choreography of *Othello ossia il Moro di Venezia* was an exhilarating experience. Writing to Peacock on 6 April 1818, he says:

> The opera itself was not a favourite [...]. But the Ballet, or rather a kind of melodrama or a pantomimic dance, was the most splendid spectacle I ever saw [...]. The manner in which language is

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5 *The Mary Shelley Reader*, 343.

6 *Letters*, II, 7f.

7 P. B. Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry' in *Shelley's Prose* D. Lee Clark (ed.) Preface by H. Bloom (London. Fourth Estate, 1966), 286.

> translated into gesture, the complete & full effect of the whole as illustrating the history in question, the unaffected self possession of each of the actors, even to the children, made this choral drama more impressive than I should have conceived possible. The story is *Othello* & strange to say it left no disagreeable impression.[8]

Shelley's enthusiasm here is far from mere hyperbole, since the Italian choreographer was certainly worthy of his praise. From 1791 to his death in 1821, Viganò's choral dramas had received the warmest appreciations: Humboldt and Foscolo, Rossini and Stendhal, all praised his works and spectacular representations for the magnificent choreography that held together, within a singular and unifying orchestration, masses of interpreters and *figuranti* engaged in a choral dance. This anticipated, in many ways, the idea of a total drama that Wagner elaborated many years later. Viganò, defined by his biographer 'gran poeta nell'arti mute, e di vivi quadri dipintore,'[9] was in fact experimenting a new form of ballet where the neoclassical rules were beautifully fused with a romantic perception of space and movement. The pictorial *ensemble* and the *tableau vivant* that he created went together with an overpowering musical accompaniment. Viganò's *Prometheus*, staged in 1813, was a memorable ballet performed in many European theatres: performances which the Shelleys must surely have heard of. Viganò's *Prometheus* was a tragic-heroic dance whose epic representation was made even more grand by the opera score taken from the music of Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart and of Viganò.

Bearing this in mind, it would be scarcely surprising if Shelley, writing his own lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound*, thought back to Viganò's ballet,[10] whose high symbolism, lightness of movement, and operatic music had struck his imagination: qualities which, perhaps significantly, also characterize his own 'operatic' poem, as *Prometheus Unbound* has been defined. Be it as it may, Viganò's choral dramas were

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8 *Letters*, II, 4.

9 Carlo Ritorni, *Commentarii della vita e delle opere coreodrammatiche di Salvatore Viganò* (Milano, 1838), 4, 19.

10 On Viganò as a possible source for Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, a very interesting article by Stuart Curran has just come to my attention - 'The Political Prometheus' published in *Spirits of Fire. English Romantic Writers and Contemporary Historical Methods* G. A. Rosso and D. P. Watkins (eds.) (London and Toronto. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 260–283.

seen by the Shelleys over and over again during their short stay in Milan. Mary, whose enthusiasm for Viganò was just as great as Percy's, records in her *Journal* five evenings spent at the Opera seeing at least two of Viganò's ballets: *Othello ossia il Moro di Venezia* and *La spada di Kenneth.*[11]

At a certain point during his journey, Shelley's notes on what he saw of Italian art became somehow more articulate and aware, not in terms of a specialized 'art critique' but as a sort of circumstantial report meant to convey a unity of design and a coherence of taste. This account of his impressions and remarks may be found, as is well known, in the letters he sent to Peacock. In fact, on 15 December 1818, nine months after his arrival in Italy, Thomas Love Peacock had written to Shelley in the following terms:

> Since I wrote last I have received your two letters from Bologna and Rome. Your descriptions of paintings are truly delightful; they make pictures more visible than I thought they could be made through the medium of words. I read them to everyone who calls on me – not many to be sure; but the general pleasure they give convinces me that if you bring home a journal full of such descriptions of the remains of art, and of the scenery of Italy, they will attract a very great share of public attention, and will be read with intense interest by every one *che sente il bello*, but who, like myself, is rooted like a tree on the banks of the one bright river.'[12]

It is superfluous to say how flattered Shelley must have been to receive such praise (and an implicit promise to collect his letters from Italy for publication) from a friend with whom he had shared in England lessons in Italian and endless readings of Italian and classic authors. If, in the back of his mind, he had probably cherished since the beginning of his journey the idea of keeping a journal, as Forsyth or Eustace had done – a diary able to shape his contemporaries' taste and views – Peacock's letter certainly gave more relevance and potential substance to his

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11 See *The Journals of Mary Shelley* Vol. I (1814–1822) P. R. Feldman and D. Scott-Kilvert (eds.) (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1987), 203, 205–207. Sunday 5th, Tuesday 7th, Monday 20th, Tuesday 21st, Wednesday 29th April 1818. On Viganò's choral dramas Mary wrote also to the Hunts: 'The corps de ballet is excellent and they throw themselves into groups fit for a scluptor [*sic*] to contemplate. The music of the ballet was very fine and the gestures striking. The dances of many performers which are so ill executed with us are here graceful to the extreme.' *The Journals*, 203, footnote 2.

12 *Letters*, II, 57, n. 4.

reactions to the Italian artistic and natural world. He was so taken with such a plan that his subsequent letters to Peacock are incredibly meticulous and detailed, as the letter from Naples, dated February 25, 1819, or that from Rome, dated March 23, 1819, clearly demonstrate. This plan may also explain the forethought that accompanies his remarks, aware as he was of his own inadequacy as an art critic. Thus, we may understand his frequent recourse to sentences such as 'It is a scene by which expression is overpower: which words cannot convey,' or 'the tourists tell you all about these things & I am afraid of stumbling upon their language when I enumerate what is so well known,' or again, 'I have said what I feel without entering into any critical discussions [...].' On the other hand, he probably thought that he was making an effort of some value if, on several occasions, writing to other friends in England, he referred back to his own remarks to Peacock as a more detailed source. In his letter to Thomas Jefferson Hogg from Naples, on 21 December 1818, he justifies his schematic report saying: ' I consider the letters to Peacock as nearly the same things as a letter addressed to you, as I know you see him at certain intervals, and they contain nothing but long accounts of my peregrinations which it would be wearisome to transcribe [...];'[13] while to Leigh Hunt in a letter dated 20 August, 1819, he says 'I have seen too little of Italy & of Pictures. Perhaps Peacock has shown you some of my letters to him [...].'[14]

Unfortunately, the death of Shelley's son William, put an end to this and other plans. After June, 7, 1819, the epistolary exchange with Peacock almost came to an end, and Shelley's attention switched towards other interests and other worries. In his subsequent letters, he deals with more private matters, with politics and, overall, with his own literary work. Shelley's visits to the art galleries, however, did not cease in 1819, on the contrary, over the next three years, whenever he had a chance, he went to the Uffizi where he spent hours in thoughtful contemplation. What really did change was his perspective: his considerations, from being critical and descriptive, became more introspective and intimate. A good example of this, was his response to the Niobe sculpture. In a letter from Pisa to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, dated April 20, 1820, he tells

13 *Ibid.*, II, 68.
14 *Ibid.*, II, 111f.

his friend about the winter spent in Florence and about the birth of his son Percy, the only child he was left with:

> I spent every sunny day to the study of the gallery there; the famous Venus, the Minerva, the Apollino – and more than all, the Niobe and her children, are there. No production of sculpture, not even the Apollo, ever produced on me so strong an effect as this Niobe. Doubtless you have seen casts of it.[15]

And, a year later, on 31 July, 1821, in a letter from Florence to Mary, who was at Bagni di Lucca with the baby Percy, he writes:

> I spent three hours this morning principally in the contemplation of the Niobe, & of a favourite Apollo; all worldly thoughts & cares seem to vanish from before the sublime emotions such spectacles create: and I am deeply impressed with the great difference of happiness enjoyed by those who live at a distance from these incarnations of all that the finest minds have conceived of beauty, & those who can resort to their company at pleasure [...].[16]

Here Shelley's reactions are twofold. On the one hand, we hear a man who speaks of an object of art, the Niobe marble, from his heart, and sees it as a representation, or, we should say, as a projection of his own parental sorrow at the death of his children; on the other hand, we hear the voice of the poet himself who approaches the sculpture as an embodiment of his ideas of art and beauty. In his *Notes on Sculptures in Rome and Florence* (1819) on the Niobe, we read:

> The countenance which is the consummation of feminine majesty and loveliness, beyond which the imagination scarcely doubts that it can conceive anything, that master-piece of the poetic harmony of marble, expresses other feelings. There is embodied a sense of the inevitable and rapid destiny which is consummating around her as if it were already over. It seems as if despair and beauty had combined and produced nothing but the sublime loveliness of grief.[17]

Here, the man and the poet have become one. If the Niobe had attracted his attention, as his remarks to Mary suggest, because what he saw was a mother desperately trying to protect her only surviving child from imminent death, at the same time he knew that he was discussing precisely the sculpture elected by the neoclassical school as the prototype of perfect beauty.

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15 *Ibid.*, II, 185f.

16 *Ibid.*, II, 313. Shelley saw the Niobe marble (by Scopas 395–350 B.C.) in the Uffizi.

17 *Shelley's Prose*, 352.

Let us try to examine this matter a little further. Going back to Shelley's letter to Peacock from Rome, dated 23 March 1819, one sees how he presents an endless list of things and places that he had visited and he seems utterly overcome by his own intellectual and emotional responses to all. Rome, he says, appeared to him as 'the inexhaustible mine of thought & feeling.'[18] What impressed him, in particular, was classical Rome, the temples, arches, sculptures and other signs left by a past that he had learned to love. If his coming to Italy was obviously an escape from an alien homeland, it may also be taken as a spiritual pilgrimage to what he considered the birthplace of civilization and culture. His reading of Schlegel's *Lectures* while crossing the British channel announced his state of mind, reinforced by his daily reading of Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* from December 24, 1818 to March 14, 1819 while he was in Naples, visiting Paestum and Herculaneum, and then in Rome.[19] The grace and the harmony that Winckelmann celebrated in the Greek art of Italy, find in the English Romantic poet's own remarks an interesting echo. In the letter to Peacock just quoted, he recognized the Greeks as 'our masters & creators, the Gods whom we should worship.' The aesthetic principles that moved his admiration are finely registered in his *Notes on the Sculptures in Rome and Florence.* But it is precisely the Niobe sculpture, together with Laocoon, that he appreciated most and to which he dedicated most of the attention in his *Notes*. In both cases, Shelley was captured by the pervasive grief that the two sculptures express, a deep, agonizing pain that was, however, presented in a controlled, almost restrained way. Besides, what he already knew about the Niobe marble, he must also have heard about Laocoon, the marble group discovered in 1506, in Nero's *Domus Aurea,* which had influenced Raffaello and Andrea del Sarto, and which Michelangelo had used for his anatomy study of muscle in a state of extreme tension. Laocoon was also celebrated by Pliny who, in his *Historia Naturalis*, a book dear to Shelley, described it as a work superior to any other painting or bronze.

To Shelley, as we read in his *Notes*, Laocoon expresses 'physical suffering, against which he pleads with an upraised countenance of despair,

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18 *Letters,* II, 89.

19 See Mary's *Journal*, 246–253.

and appeals with a sense of its injustice, seems the predominant and overwhelming emotion, and yet there is a nobleness in the expression and a majesty that dignifies torture.'[20] It is precisely this noble stoicism that Shelley admired, this ability of the Greek artist to portray physical pain and extreme suffering while preserving and communicating the human dignity of the subjects. According to Shelley, in fact, the skill of the artists does not lie in the portrayal or staging of violence and pain as they really are or as they are really felt, but in holding back the emotional and physical tension in order not to be prey to chaos and disorder, that freeze the emotions rather than release them. He called for an art able to escape from the paralysing dimension of wild fears and blind terrors in order to leave room for the perception of an inner life, the reality of the soul and of the mind. True beauty, therefore, would spring from a just balance between the energy released and the energy retained, from bodily representation and spiritual insight. This idea of beauty – made of grace, composure and dignity as well as of passion and power – was partly derived from classical art and literature and in modern times was well articulated by Winckelmann, who cited the Laocoon and Niobe as the highest examples of heroism and restraint in art: 'Niobe's pain,' he says, 'is transmuted into an astonished stiffening, Laocoon's agony into the stoical repression of the outcry of his entire being.'[21] It is not by chance, that for the two marble groups, Winckelmann used the metaphor of the sea whose depth remains calm even when its surface becomes rough.

Shelley's notes differ in many ways from Winckelmann's remarks, however. He does not seem, for instance, so much taken by the two adult figures, Laocoon and Niobe, as by the representation of their children: 'Their features and attitudes,' he observes of Laocoon, 'indicate the excess of the filial love and devotion that animates them and swallows up all other feelings,'[22] while Niobe's child is seen instead as a

> child terrified [...] at the strange destruction of all its kindred - has fled to its mother and hiding its head in the fold of her robe and casting up one arm as in a passionate appeal for defence from her, where it never before could have sought in vain, seems in the marble to have scarcely suspended the motion of her terror as though conceived to be yet in the act of arrival.[23]

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20 *Shelley's Prose*, 344.

21 The English translation is mine. I have here used the following edition: Winckelmann, *Il bello nell'arte. Scritti sull'arte antica* a cura di F. Pfister (Torino, 1988), 29.

22 *Shelley's Prose*, 344.

23 *Ibid.*, 352.

This shift in focus may be explained in part, by the attention that the poet had always given to the weak and to the powerless. The suffering and the pathos, that Winckelmann almost erases, are at the centre of Shelley's attention.

Now if one compares Shelley's remarks on the plastic arts with his poetical output, once again interesting coincidences emerge. *The Cenci* proves this in an exemplary way. In the preface, Shelley warns the reader about the 'sad reality' of the story that he is going to represent, but soon after, he states that

> This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring.[24]

The tragedy is developed accordingly. Count Cenci's rape of his daughter will not be staged: on the contrary, the two characters will meet only twice in the course of the whole tragedy, just enough to show and portray Beatrice's stubbornness and generosity, gentleness and isolation. Nevertheless, the tension between the two characters is always there, intense and painful. But all we are allowed to see is a highly stylized representation of the sufferings which Beatrice's body, and even more so her psyche, are enduring.

One could offer many other examples, but let me speed towards my conclusion by spending a few words on another relevant aspect of Shelley's response to Italian art. I am referring to his reactions to 16th and 17th Century Italian painting. Again, for reasons of time (and space), I have to limit myself to a particular example, that is, to his visit to Bologna which had occurred earlier. I choose Bologna not because of localism or parochialism, but because it seems to me that his remarks then summarize very well what he would say later on about paintings in Florence, Rome and Naples. Shelley's stay in Bologna took place at an early stage of his journey through Italy, in November 1818. The considerations he expressed during his stay there, however, coincide very much with what I have discussed so far. In a letter to Peacock, dated 9 November, he describes

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24 *Shelley: Poetical Works,* Thomas Hutchinson (ed.), new ed. corr. G. M. Matthews (London. Oxford University Press, 1970), 276.

his visits to churches and galleries and goes into great detail about the paintings that he saw. He mentions, among others, Guido Reni, Correggio, Raffaello and Guercino. His praise is for Correggio, whose *Christ Beatified* he finds 'inexpressibly fine,' and for Guido Reni and Raffaello. He discusses Reni's *Murder of the Innocents*, *Jesus Christ Crucified*, *Samson and the Philistines, Fortune and Love*, and a *Madonna Lattante*; and he refers to Raffaello's renowned *St. Cecilia*.[25] Strangely enough, he fails to mention the Carracci brothers, although Annibale Carracci will be mentioned later on, during his stay in Rome. Even in this case, Shelley may be said to have been particularly fortunate, since many of the works that he listed to Peacock had only been returned to Italy three years before his arrival. Raffaello's *Santa Cecilia*, for instance, was brought back from France, together with many other works of art stolen by the French Napoleonic army, thanks to Canova's mission to Paris in 1815. Obviously aware of the admiration that the painting had aroused over the centuries, he may have been acquainted with Vasari's reminiscences of it – such as the story about Francesco Francia, who was employed by Raffaello to oversee the transportation to and display of his *Santa Cecilia* in Bologna, and who, when he discovered its superb beauty on arrival, died from sheer emotion. Shelley too describes it in almost ecstatic terms:

> You forget that it is a picture as you look at it, and yet is most unlike any of those things which we call reality. It is of the inspired and ideal kind, and seems to have been conceived & executed in a similar state of feeling to that which produced among the ancients those perfect specimens of poetry sculpture which are the baffling models of succeeding generations. There is an unity & perfection in it of an incommunicable kind.[26]

The poet goes on to enthuse about her 'dark eloquent eyes lifted up,' her 'chestnut hair flung back' and her 'countenance as it were calmed by the depth of its passion & rapture,' 'she is listening to the music of heaven,' 'at her feet lie instruments of music broken & unstrung.'[27] Santa Cecilia, known as the patroness of music and art, is perfectly represented by the poet's words. The painting, on which Guido Reni shaped his own ascetic figures, is traditionally recognized as the embodiment of Raffaello's neo-

25 *Letters*, II, 49–53.
26 *Ibid.*, 51.
27 *Ibid.*, 52.

platonic view, and the best well known example of Renaissance 'idealisation,' joining, as it does, through a simple human countenance, earth and heaven. Reading this judgement one may ask if Shelley ever had the chance to read what Raffaello wrote in a letter to Baldassar Castiglione (talking of *Galatea*), in 1516, where he said that the perfect image comes from

> una certa Idea che mi viene nella mente [...] per dipingere una bella, mi bisognerai veder più belle, con questa condizione, che, si trovasse meco a far scelta del meglio. Ma essendo carestia e di buoni giudici, et di belle donne, io mi servo di certa Idea che mi viene nella mente.[28]

This certainly agreed with Shelley's platonic idea of an *epi-psyche* which could come to life from a dream.

Despite his admiration, Shelley cannot refrain – as in *A Defence of Poetry* – from considering painting an art with a shorter life span than literature or even sculpture; an art however, whose beauty will be retained and reproduced by the work of other artists (and other arts) who have experienced it, and so he concludes:

> The material part indeed of these works must perish, but they survive in the mind of man, & the remembrances connected with them are transmitted from generation to generation. The poet embodies them in his creation, the systems of philosophers are modelled to gentleness by their contemplation, opinion that legislator is infected with their influence; men become better & wiser, and the unseen seeds are perhaps thus sown which shall produce a plant more excellent even that (than) from which they fell.[29]

What I find fascinating in this quotation is Shelley's anticipation of his own poetic theory as it will be articulated in two years' time, in the *Defence*. He lays here the foundation for an organic approach to art and knowledge, an approach made of correspondences and unity, of aesthetic beauty and social improvement. In this perspective Guido Reni's and Raffaello's paintings become the blossoms sprouting from a plant that has grown from the seeds of Petrarch's and Dante's writings, and will in their turn lead to the flowering of other arts in an endless line of

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28 G. Vasari, 'La vita di Raffaello' in *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori (1550-1568)* G. Milanesi (ed.) (Firenze, 1878), XLVII.

29 *Letters*, 53.

progression and civilization. From this point of view, Shelley is far from sharing a rigidly neo-classical view, as well as a nostalgically romantic view, Winckelmann's, say, or Schlegel's. Shelley's Greek and Roman, or Medieval and Renaissance worlds are not lost in a golden past, but are living spirits politically at work here and now: living forces which Italy contains and preserves, but only to consign them to the better world of tomorrow.

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Cathestant or Protholic?: Shelley's Italian Imaginings

Michael O'Neill

As Laura Quinney observes in the *London Review of Books*, 'Shelley's poetic development has always been something of a puzzle.' She makes the bold claim that his evident improvement was not due to any new ideas or changed aesthetic, but to the 'arduous development of prosodic skill.' But, as she also indicates, it is impossible to separate form from thought in work as fine as Shelley's later poems.[1] I want to support the thesis that Shelley's poetry benefited greatly from his contact with Italy - in particular, with the poetry of Dante and, in special senses which I shall try to clarify, with the spiritual vision he met there.[2]

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A fascinating and often noted aspect of Shelley's work is how much commerce it has with religious traditions (despite his avowed atheism), even as he refuses to be reclaimed by any such tradition.[3] This fluidity of

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1 L. Quinney, 'Teeth of Mouldy Blue,' *London Review of Books*, 21 September 2000, 22f. All quotations from p. 23, including the remark that in a passage from *Adonais* Shelley 'has so compounded the power of the style and the power of the thought that it is difficult to distinguish between them.'

2 Among the many critical works addressing the question of Shelley's response to Italy, particular mention might be made of C. P. Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics: The Italianate Fashion in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1957); T. Webb, *The Violet in the Crucible: Shelley and Translation* (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1976); T. Webb, *Shelley: A Voice Not Understood* (Manchester. Manchester University, 1977); A. M. Weinberg, *Shelley's Italian Experience* (Basingstoke. Macmillan, 1991) and R. Pite, *The Circle of Our Vision: Dante's Presence in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1994). See the bibliographies in Weinberg and Pite for further relevant works. See also S. Curran, 'Figuration in Shelley and Dante' in *Dante's Modern Afterlife: Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney* N. Havely (ed.) (Basingstoke. Macmillan, 1998), 49-59.

3 See D. Fuller, 'Shelley and Jesus,' *Durham University Journal*, n.s. 54 (1993), for the view that though 'Shelley's attitude to Christianity is iconoclastic,' 'he is also, fundamentally, a religious poet,' 211. See also R. M. Ryan's subtle discussion of Shelley's religious views in *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789-1824* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1997) and A. Brayley's 'Shelley, L'Italia e Il Cristianesimo' in *Shelley e L'Italia*, L. M. Crisafulli (ed.) (Naples. Liguori, 1998), 309-21, 396-7.

response accounts for my title, which draws on the Irish poet and academic Brendan Kennelly's droll re-categorising of groupings - Catholic and Protestant - that have dominated western culture.[4] Certainly I have no wish to engage in a sectarian debate about Shelley's imagined religious allegiances: Shelley's kind of subtlety makes it inappropriate for any religious group to claim him as however heterodox a fellow-traveller. He can be seen using religious traditions, yet refusing allegiance to them, in *Adonais*; if the Preface tells us that the physical John Keats is buried in the 'romantic and lonely cemetery of the protestants' (p. 390), it is a distinctly Catholic (or Dantean) cosmology that Shelley remodels in describing the 'Heaven of song' (l. 413) into which the spiritual Keats is invited to ascend towards the close of the poem.[5] Urgent yet insouciant in its dealings with previous cultural records of enduring spiritual significance, *Adonais* bears witness at such moments to an authorial imagination that one is tempted to call ecumenical as well as heterodox. Shelley refuses to bind himself to any one sect of Christianity as he seeks to 'draw' that religion 'into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true' (*A Defence of Poetry*, p. 482).

To make such a claim is to call into question a central argument of Bryan Shelley's valuable study *Shelley and Scripture*, which finds in Shelley's response to Catholic Italy a definitely 'Protestant apprehension.'[6] That phrase occurs in the Preface to *The Cenci* in a passage that is even-handed in its critical distance from Italian Catholicism and English Protestantism. Shelley writes like a student of religious cultures, observing how in Catholic Italy, 'Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society,' and yet how, though it 'is interwoven with the whole fabric of life,' 'It has no necessary connexion with any one virtue' (p. 241). It 'is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days,' or

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4 Brendan Kennelly is attributed by Declan Kiberd with these coinages in Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* (1995; London. Vintage, 1996), 685, n. 20.

5 Unless indicated otherwise, Shelley's poetry and prose are quoted from *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, D. H. Reiman and S. B. Powers (eds.) (New York. Norton, 1977); page references are given for prose quotations. Alan Weinberg notes that stanza 46 of *Adonais* constructs a likeness to 'one of Dante's heavenly spheres,' *Shelley's Italian Experience*, 195.

6 The phrase comes from the Preface to *The Cenci* (p. 240). It is used by Bryan Shelley as the title of the fourth chapter of his *Shelley and Scripture: The Interpreting Angel* (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1994).

more impressively, though the impressiveness is not unambiguous, 'a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him' (p. 240): phrasing that sardonically makes strange a very Shelleyan activity. Just as sardonically, Shelley was able to write to Medwin (July 1820): 'Your objections to "The Cenci" as to the introduction of the name of God is [*sic*] good, inasmuch as the play is addressed to a Protestant people; but *we* Catholics speak eternally and familiarly of the first person of the Trinity; and amongst *us* religion is more interwoven with, and less extraneous to, the system of ordinary life.'[7] Shelley's identification with Catholicism is evidently mocking here, and the play itself offers a stringent critique of the corruption to which the interweaving of 'religion' and 'ordinary life' gives rise in Catholic Renaissance Italy. Its attack on systems that reinforce the power of the father takes on almost cartoon-like clarity when the Pope is reported by Camillo as supporting Cenci since 'He holds it of most dangerous example / In aught to weaken the paternal power, / Being as 'twere, the shadow of his own' (II, ii, 54-6). As so often in Shelley's work, the play articulates the view that a religious system serves to bolster patriarchal oppression.

Yet religion, whether Catholic or Protestant, also embodies a desire for spiritual betterment to which Shelley is responsive, albeit in fiercely re-defining ways. It is equally significant that 'Imagination' is singled out for special approval by the Preface to *The Cenci* and that the figurative language used to describe its workings derives from the language of religious belief. When art emerges in the Preface as the true religion - 'Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion' (p. 241) -, the description implies a humanist equivalent to Christ's incarnation. In a darker way, the play is 'Protholic' (or 'Cathestant'). If 'penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being' is a Protestant obsession, then the Cenci family, for all their Catholic sense of 'religion' as 'interwoven' with 'ordinary life,' have a proleptic

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7 F. L. Jones (ed.) *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* 2 vols (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1964), II, 219. Michael Rossington draws attention to this letter in his editorial gloss to the Preface in his edition of the play in *The Poems of Shelley: Vol. 2, 1817-1819*, K. Everest and G. Matthews (eds.), contributing editors, J. Donovan, *Laon and Cythna*, R. Pite, *Julian and Maddalo*, M. Rossington, *The Cenci* (Harlow. Longman, 2000), 732.

strain of Protestantism in that familial weakness for 'self-anatomy' on which Orsino comments and which he sees as teaching 'the will / Dangerous secrets' (II, ii, 110, 110-111).

There is, then, a need to qualify the view of Shelley's 'apprehension' as 'Protestant,' even if one grants that the adjective is being used by its proponents with a deliberate looseness of fit. True, the label can seem to fit aspects of Shelley's thought and work. However, it can also simplify poetic experiences that are far more fluid than the label allows. When Bryan Shelley reads the mysterious 'shape all light' in *The Triumph of Life* as connected with 'the MYSTERY of Babylon in the Bible,' there is an unintended effect of caricature, as though Shelley were being portrayed as an obsessive fundamentalist.[8] Here, more attention to Dante's influence on the poem may have led to a less trenchant emphasis, since, above anything else, it is Dante's female figures who ambiguously shadow the shape and haunt Shelley's imaginings. The episode (translated by Shelley) of Matilda gathering flowers in the Earthly Paradise in the *Purgatorio* allows him a way into his own purgatorial scenario, while in her overwhelming impact on Rousseau the shape seems like a 'Protholic' creation - a mixture of Beatrice and the False Duessa in *The Faerie Queene*. Shelley has borrowed from Dante the narrative device of visionary encounter (and one imagines he would agree with Teodolinda Barolini that 'The *Commedia* makes narrative believers of us all'), but he has not carried forward Dante's practice of passing judgement on the figure encountered.[9] At any rate, such judgement, as is evident in the meeting with Rousseau, is complexly relativist or even unavailable to the subjective consciousness: 'Why this should be,' Rousseau declares, 'my mind can compass not' (l. 303).

Above all, though, the Dantean example provides Shelley with a model for representing the search for authentic reality: a search that, even if it hopes to end up with a glimpse of objective truth, is necessarily

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8 *Shelley and Scripture*, 170. Despite my criticism of this interpretation, Bryan Shelley's book is of real significance in pondering Shelley's handling of scriptural writings. For a fuller account of his book, see my review in *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 47 (1996), 429-30.

9 T. Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologzing Dante* (Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press, 1992), 16. There are analogies between Barolini's attempt to release 'our reading of the *Commedia* from the author's grip' (p. 17) and my reading of Shelley's later poetry as remarkably fluid in its handling of ideas.

subjective. As Carlyle puts it, in 'The Hero as Poet,' in terms that recall Shelley's praise of Dante (quoted below) in *A Defence of Poetry*, 'All cathedrals, pontificalities, brass and stone, and outer arrangement never so lasting, are brief in comparison to an unfathomable heart-song like this [that is, the *Commedia*]; one feels as if it might survive, still of importance to men, when these had all sunk into new irrecognizable combinations, and had ceased individually to be.' It is a song of and from the heart that puts to flight 'pontificalities,' yet it owes its 'unfathomable' power to Dante's conviction that the world beyond 'this Time-world, with its Florences and banishments' is fixed, real, and visible, eclipsing (and here Carlyle has caught one of Shelley's predominant if sceptical rather than Platonic notes) 'the 'unreal shadow' of the here and now. Altogether, one is tempted to say, Dante is for Carlyle very much a 'Protholic' or 'Cathestant' poet, one who foresees that it is the fate of things involving 'outer arrangement' to end up as 'new irrecognizable combinations.' Carlyle's Dante is outside creed or ideology, writing his great work 'with his heart's blood.'[10] There, Carlyle feels his way towards an account of what a great poet is that anticipates one of Harold Bloom's most eloquent rhetorical flourishes, his depiction of Shelley as 'in many ways *the* poet proper, as much so as any in the language.' Bloom goes on to remark, in terms relevant to the present essay's understanding of Shelley's poetry, that 'His poetry is autonomous, finely wrought, in the highest degree imaginative, and has the spiritual form of vision, stripped of all veils and ideological coverings, the vision many readers justly seek in poetry, despite the admonitions of a multitude of churchwardenly critics.'[11]

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Dante may have been 'the first religious reformer,' in Shelley's view, anticipating Luther, according to *A Defence of Poetry*, in 'the boldness of his censures of papal usurpation' (p. 499). Shelley, too, can

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10 Thomas Carlyle, 'The Hero as Poet' (from *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 1840), in *English Critical Essays: Nineteenth Century*, selected and ed. E. D. Jones (London. OUP, 1971), 238, 227, 228.

11 H. Bloom, 'The Unpastured Sea: An Introduction to Shelley' in *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago and London. The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 87.

surely be supposed to share his narrator's objections in *The Triumph of Life* to 'Gregory and John and men divine // Who rose like shadows between Man and god' (ll. 288-9); his manuscript's capital letter for the start of 'Man' and lower-case 'g' for 'god' are telling. But, even here, as the passage continues, 'Till that eclipse, still hanging under Heaven, / Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode // For the true Sun it quenched' (ll. 290-2), polemic complicates. If you do not work with the axiom that Shelley is a dogmatic atheist, you can have much sympathy with Robert Ryan's view that 'the true Sun' can be seen as the latest version of 'that transcendent ineffable Being who haunts Shelley's imagination, but whom he seems hesitant even to name.' For Ryan, this being is the 'Unknown God' in whom *Hellas* affects to believe, if only as a Supreme Fiction.[12] I would not go as far as Ryan: the Sun is too consciously an image for it to be assigned an extra-textual theological status. But the image, hauling with it the desire to believe, owes much to Dante (as well as Plato). It brings to mind Marco Lombardo in *Purgatorio*, canto 16, and the 'two Suns, whose light made clear / both roads, that of the world, and that of God' (ll. 107-8): 'One hath the other quenched' (l. 109), Lombardo continues, meaning that the Papacy has got too big for its boots compared with the Emperor.[13] Shelley, in answer to Ryan, employs a Dantean rhetoric, but for his individual ends; the rhetoric is curiously drained of conviction, save the figurative impulse to construct the fiction of an absolute, a 'true Sun.'

Still, Dante's vision, worlds away from the secularized dissent of Shelley's early mentors, can be felt exercising its influence here, and *The Triumph of Life* pays tribute to *The Divine Comedy* as a work that tells 'the wondrous story / How all things are transfigured, except Love' (ll. 475-6). That compliment is heartfelt, even if 'wondrous' and 'transfigured' take on a contagious irony by virtue of a context in which the poem is about to present a 'wonder' (l. 480) that is a monstrous pageant: a pageant whose transfigurations are so many forms of disfigurement. 'Earnest to explore within,' begins Shelley's translation of *Purgatorio* canto 28, and the line might suggest the way in which Shelley responds to Dante.[14]

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12 Ryan, 223.

13 Quoted from Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Text with Translation*, trans. G. L. Bickersteth (1965 repr. Oxford. Blackwell, 1972).

14 Quoted from the corrected text in T. Webb, *The Violet in the Crucible*, 313f.

Dante serves as a prompter to self-exploration and as a model for the attempted ascent, involving straining at the limits of language, of 'unascended Heaven' (*Prometheus Unbound*, III, iv, 203), however secularised that 'Heaven' may be in Shelley.[15] If in Dante ineffability often reinforces the ultimate reality of that which cannot be defined, in Shelley ineffability frequently involves a struggle towards what is, as yet, only potential. Historical distance means that Shelley cannot but differ from Dante, yet Dante's ability to combine terror and loveliness sponsors the Romantic poet's own accommodation of what Quinney calls 'antithetical effects.' An example is, in Quinney's words, 'the radiant and terrible opening' of *The Triumph of Life*:[16]

> Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
> Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
> Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask
>
> Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth. (ll. 1-4)

Various passages from *The Divine Comedy* suggest themselves as points of departure for Shelley's achievement here: the account, for instance, in *Purgatorio,* canto I, lines 115-20:

> The matin hour had now begun to flee
> before the advancing dawn, and far away
> I recognized the shimmering of the sea.
> We paced the lonely level, like as they
> who, the road lost, go seeking it anew
> and, till they find it, deem they vainly stray.

These lines combine Dante's willingness to concede uncertainty - he and Virgil are like those who seek a road they have lost - and yet to offer steady assurance of an order to be re-found. In *The Triumph of Life,* Shelley's language, by contrast, plays its own sardonic, poignant games with the tones of certitude and celebration it employs. The workings of Dantean simile are tested ruthlessly in the opening line, where 'Swift *as* a spirit' (emphasis added) raises, especially on re-reading, the lurking possibility that the likeness may be deceptive. Again, on re-reading, the

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15 See T. Webb, 'The Unascended Heaven: Negatives in *Prometheus Unbound*' in *Shelley Revalued: Essays from the Gregynog Conference* K. Everest (ed.) (Leicester. Leicester University Press, 1983). Webb comments that Shelley's use of negatives, 'tentative in its definition yet adulatory in its tone, bears some resemblance to the language of theology and religious contemplation,' 37.

16 Quinney, 'Teeth of Mouldy Blue,' 23.

falling of a mask will impress us as less than wholly desirable, once we have seen how that image has been 'transfigured' towards the fragment's close: 'Mask after mask fell from the countenance / And form of all' (ll. 536-7). The poem is able to bring its own relativisms and instabilities into counterpointed contrast with Dantean absolutes.

Alan Weinberg remarks that 'one could say that a poem like *Epipsychidion* charts a daring course between the "despotism" of convention and the "anarchy" of subversion.'[17] The comment is generally illuminating about Shelley's poetry written in Italy, especially *Epipsychidion, Adonais*, and *The Triumph of Life*. In all these works, the poetry sways between honouring the achievements of the past and remodelling them for its own purposes; moreover, it sustains a self-aware commentary on this process in the details of its language. The poetry's 'own purposes' include the wish to explore those 'agencies of the invisible world,' the 'partial apprehension' of which 'is called religion' (p. 482) in *A Defence of Poetry*. This 'invisible world' can be located for Shelley in two interpenetrating spheres, indicated by the hope expressed in his 'Ode to Liberty' that 'human thoughts might kneel alone, / Each before the judgement-throne / Of its own aweless soul, or of the power unknown!' (ll. 231-3).[18] The latter constantly reappears under the sign of the former. For Earl Wasserman, a related manuscript passage for the 'Ode to Liberty' and the account of inspiration in *A Defence* 'put aside the religious question of the relation of the individual to the transcendent One' and consider 'the poet as autonomous, containing the inspiring force mysteriously within himself but outside the boundaries of his understanding.' But the lines quoted above from the 'Ode' can less easily be seen as putting aside 'the religious question,' even as they link that question to the possibility that 'divine inspiration ... is within the human self.'[19]

Affinity and difference: the formula is at work throughout Shelley's dealings with his 'Cathestant' forebear, Dante. In *Epipsychidion* Shelley explores 'love,' a force which moves the Sun and the other stars, for him as for Dante. But if Dante's cosmology is ordered and theologically

17 Weinberg, 288, n. 64.

18 See E. R. Wasserman's comments on an 'unused manuscript passage' of the 'Ode to Liberty,' *Shelley: A Critical Reading* (Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 206f.

19 *Ibid.*

grounded, Shelley's metaphors of the self as 'this passive Earth' ruled by 'Twin Spheres of light' (l. 345) are, as 'this' reveals, consciously figurative. Like poetry itself, these 'vitally metaphorical' images are used by the poet to mark 'the before unapprehended relations of things' (*A Defence of Poetry*, p. 482). The redrawing of the 'relations' between 'things' is a constant presence and pressure in Shelley's poetry. It is apparent in his attempt in *A Defence of Poetry* to distinguish between the abiding and the transient in Dante's work : 'The distorted notions of invisible things which Dante and his rival Milton have idealized, are merely the mask and the mantle in which these great poets walk through eternity enveloped and disguised' (p. 498). Later, he asserts that 'The Divina Commedia and Paradise Lost have conferred upon modern mythology a systematic form' and prophesies a time when 'commentators will be learnedly employed in elucidating the religion of ancestral Europe, only not utterly forgotten because it will have been stamped with the eternity of genius' (p. 499). These reversals are part of Shelley's Janus-faced dealings with past cultures and creeds: he accords medieval Catholicism and Reformation Protestantism the status of a 'mythology,' very much in tune with Enlightenment rationalism as he does so, but deeply Romantic in the implicit value he places on the capacity to give form to thought in 'poetry.' The *Paradiso*, he argues in the same work, 'is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry'; if he admires the ordering of the work, it is first and foremost as an embodiment of imagination, in which 'as by steps he [Dante] feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause' (p. 497). Here Shelley elides the doctrinal differences between himself and Dante, giving us in that image ('as by steps') a way of grasping the fictionalising, the feigning that elicits imaginative truth in the *Paradiso*. Shelley also describes the *Paradiso* as 'a perpetual hymn of everlasting love' (p. 497), where the two adjectives are not quite synonyms: 'perpetual' suggests the dynamism of the poem, its ever-altering, spiralling journey through the heavens; 'everlasting' makes of 'love' a lower-case trans-cultural absolute that challenges the doctrinal, Thomism giving way to a force that reappears throughout cultures.

Again, the *Vita Nuova* emerges, in terms strikingly similar to those used by Shelley of *Epipsychidion* (see *Letters*, ii, 434), as 'an inexhaustible fountain of purity of sentiment and language; it is the idealized history of that period, and those intervals of his life which were dedicated to love' (p. 497): 'idealized' means 'exalted to an ideal perfection' and makes

one look carefully at the meaning of 'ideal.' Certainly for the Shelley of *Epipsychidion* writing 'an idealized history' of his feelings (*Letters*, ii, 434), the word wavers between meaning (as a noun) 'conception of something ... as perfect in its kind' and (as an adjective) 'existing only in idea' (definitions drawn from the OED). As an 'idealized history,' the *Vita Nuova* shares the capacity of any 'great Poem' to be 'a fountain for ever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight' (*A Defence of Poetry*, p. 500); 'wisdom,' though, differs from the affecting of 'a moral aim' (*A Defence of Poetry*, p. 488).

Which is to say that Dante's version of the *Vita Nuova* in the *Convivio* - according to which the 'gentil donna' who consoles Dante after Beatrice's death towards the close of the *Vita Nuova* turns out to be Philosophy - would have probably cut little ice with Shelley at the literal level.[20] Yet at the anagogical level he was able to discover in Dante's conflict a latent spiritual sense, since it corresponds to his own sense of inner conflict. Indeed, as a model, the *Vita Nuova* licenses what it thrives on: that is, the exploration of hidden meanings and the dramatization of conflict within consciousness. Shelley's dual sense of the former emerges in his highly coded and tricksy 'Advertisement' where he (or the imagined author of the 'Advertisement') implies that a literal-minded reader would find the poem 'incomprehensible' (p. 373), yet that the poem's rhetoric - and here he quotes in Italian from the *Vita Nuova*, section 25 - conceals 'a real meaning' (p. 101). The 'battle of thoughts' (p. 139) of which Dante writes in section 39 pervades Shelley's poem, albeit in unannounced ways. Above all, there is the clash between the desire to praise and the poet's artful yet impassioned sense of his linguistic 'infirmity' (l. 71). His 'world of fancies' (l. 70) is both created by and inadequate to the needs of 'The world ... of thoughts that worshipped her' (l. 245). And, throughout, there is a dizzying interplay, known about in the texture of the verse, between the wish to claim that Emily has transcendent value

20 *The 'Vita Nuova' and Canzoniere of Dante Alighieri* (1906; London. Dent, 1911), 130; *The 'Convivio' of Dante Alighieri* (4th ed.) (London. Dent, 1924): 'And so, at the close of this second treatise, I declare and affirm that the lady of whom I was enamoured after my first love was the most fair and noble daughter of the Emperor of the universe, to whom Pythagoras gave the name of Philosophy,' 134. Subsequent references to both works will be to these editions; page references will be given in parentheses.

and the recognition that the value perceived is necessarily value conferred by the projecting creative imagination.

Robert Pogue Harrison points out that the *Vita Nuova* 'is at bottom shocking, even blasphemous, in the way it glorifies a mortal woman named Beatrice.' However, alive to the work's inner tensions, he observes that the significance with which Beatrice is invested makes the poem profoundly Christian. Unlike Cavalcanti, for whom 'the beloved is nothing more than an bewitching illusion' (Harrison argues), Dante needed to believe that 'Beatrice was the evidence of grace in the midst of a condition of disgrace.'[21] Shelley, as the extra-poetic evidence of his letters about Emilia reinforces, knew all about 'bewitching illusion,' and his poem is profoundly attuned to the issues that Harrison explores. The language of *Epipsychidion* acknowledges the strain involved in seeing Emily as both 'a mortal shape' (l. 112) and as 'indued / With love and life and light and deity' (ll. 112-13); if the abstractions dance around their own self-fulfilling dream of perfection, they concede the limited, strictly linguistic nature of that fulfilment. But the need to find a person to be the incarnation of a vision, even as that very process transforms our sense of what a real person is, is strongly felt in passages such as the one beginning 'The glory of her being' (l. 91): hyper-sensuous in its vision of 'utmost fingers glowing / With the unintermitted blood' (ll. 97-8) but driving on to subsume the individual within 'that Beauty' (l. 102) 'Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world' (l. 103). Earl Schulze is perceptive when he writes of the daringly heterodox reworking of the *Purgatorio*, canto XV, in Shelley's defence of 'True Love' (l. 160) that Shelley 'makes over Dante's theological mystery into a secular ethic.'[22] Yet Shelley's secularism has about it a distinctly, if humanistically, theological tinge. In a comparable fashion, the fourth act of *Prometheus Unbound* has a relation to the *Paradiso* that is finer than that of critique. Shelley's vision of a complex harmony - embodied in 'A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres' (IV, 238) - has much in common with, and is deeply penetrated by, this vision-expanding account in the *Paradiso*, canto 10:

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21 R. P. Harrison, 'Approaching the *Vita Nuova*,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante* R. Jacoff (ed.) (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1993), 35, 39, 43.

22 E. Schulze, 'The Dantean Quest of *Epipsychidion*,' *Studies in Romanticism*, 21:2 (1982), 199.

Raise, then, thy vision, Reader, as I do,
unto the lofty wheels, straight to that part
where the one motion strikes the other through;
and there with joy begin to admire the art
of Him whose eye is never turned aside
from masterpiece framed after his own heart. (7-12)

The explicit exhortation to the 'Reader' to 'Raise' his or her 'vision' 'unto the lofty wheels' 'where the one motion strikes the other through' is caught up, implicitly, by Shelley's deployment of a demanding, exhilaratingly intricate idiom. Where Shelley differs from Dante is his refusal to assign ultimate authority to 'arte / di quel maestro' (the art of that master): God the ultimate worker of masterpieces has given way to the human imagination. But Dante is tugging Shelley into realms hardly glimpsed in earlier work.[23] To put it another way: what we find here and elsewhere is Shelley practising what he preached, that 'going out of our own nature, and [...] identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own' (p. 487) of which he writes in *A Defence of Poetry.*

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In this section I shall focus more closely on two passages from Shelley's Italian poetry that illustrate some of the foregoing contentions. The first occurs at the end of *Epipsychidion*, the poem's *envoi*, when Shelley re-connects his poem to the Dantean tradition of love poetry:

Weak Verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet,
And say:—'We are the masters of thy slave;
What wouldest thou with us and ours and thine?'
Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave,
All singing loud: 'Love's very pain is sweet,
But its reward is in the world divine
Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave.'
So shall ye live when I am there. Then haste
Over the hearts of men, until ye meet
Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest,
And bid them love each other and be blest:
And leave the troop which errs, and which reproves,
And come and be my guest, — for I am Love's. (592-604)

23 Alan Weinberg writes that 'Shelley's success, like Dante's, lies in his ability to reconstitute his vision of redemption on a more elevated cosmic plane than was achieved at the close of Act III,' *Shelley's Italian Experience*, 133.

Re-connects, because the poem's 'invitation au voyage' (407-591) has just watched itself explode in the intense inane of Shelley's own visionary world. 'The winged words on which my soul would pierce / Into the height of love's rare Universe, / Are chains of lead around its flight of fire.— / I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!' (588-91). Shelley stages a poetic 'expiration' that suggests the failure, if glorious failure, of his 'winged words' to convey his soul into 'love's rare Universe.' The reiterated use of the first person, plus the phrase 'my soul,' indicate that the poem has discovered its disconnectedness with tradition. The *envoi* reverses that confession-cum-boast of poetic solitude, and yet if the movement back into tradition is managed gracefully, it is shadowed by the storm and fury of what has just preceded it. In the *envoi* Shelley goes back to the consciously literary and indebted manner of the stanza at the head of the poem translated from the *tornata* of the canzone, 'Voi ch'intendendo il terzo ciel movete,' as we are told in the screening 'Advertisement.' Still, as Timothy Webb has pointed out, that stanza adds to Dante's canzone a touch that bespeaks the Romantic poet's greater sense of difficulty with an imagined audience.[24] Dante writes, in the *Convivio* (the work Shelley knew as the *Convito*); 'if perchance it come about that thou take thy way into the presence of folk who seem not rightly to perceive it; Then I pray thee to take heart again, And say to them, O my beloved lastling [diletta mia novella]: "Give heed at least how beautiful I am".' (p. 62). Shelley, at his most aristocratically urbane, says to his 'Song' : 'comfort thy sweet self again, / My last delight! tell them that they are dull, / And bid them own that thou art beautiful.' 'Dull' takes the translation into the contemporary literary in-fighting apparent in the dedication to *The Witch of Atlas*, with its humorous criticism of Wordsworth for his 'slow, dull care' (l. 28). But when Shelley turns, in Dante's account of the purpose of the *tornata*, 'to address the work itself, as though to hearten it' (*Convivio*, II, ii, p. 70), his 'heartening' rests upon a notion of 'beauty' that seems finally if bravely without the philosophical grounding apparent in Dante. The final line's assertiveness ('And bid them own that thou art beautiful') barely conceals a degree of plaintiveness. Direct speech in Dante gives way to indirect speech in

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24 *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poems and Prose* T. Webb (ed.) critical selection, G. Donaldson (London. Dent, 1995): 'Shelley's version of the Italian is fairly accurate except that he has added "tell them that they are dull,"' 421f.

Shelley, and there is just a hint in Shelley of someone talking to himself as much as to an audience. In addition, 'own' suggests that, at best, the auditors will be obliged to 'concede' the song's beauty.

In the *envoi*, as in the dedication, Shelley signals the presence of a paratextual frame by using a different rhyme scheme from the flowing couplets of the main body of the work.[25] Adapting Gérard Genette's definition of 'paratext,' Paul Magnuson defines 'paratext as an esthetic border constantly crossed and re-crossed, so that reading regularly moves across the paratext from poem to a previous public utterance.'[26] Magnuson is especially concerned with the movement between the aesthetic and public discourse. Yet if one sees Shelley as staying within the aesthetic, yet moving consciously between versions of the aesthetic, one comes closer to defining the nuanced impact of the dedication and *envoi*. In the *envoi*, he draws, as Weinberg points out, on the end of the canzone written after Beatrice's death in the *Vita Nuova* as well as on a poem by Cavalcanti ('La forte e nova mia disaventura').[27] The Dantean poem concludes with a reference to 'Pietosa mia canzone' (my piteous song), told to 'go thy weeping way; and find the dames and damsels to whom thy sisters were wont to bring gladness' (p. 121). Shelley's *envoi* recalls yet modifies Dante's stanza. For the piteous song, he has 'Weak Verses,' but there is strength in this weakness. Dante's poem is told merely to 'go hence disconsolate to abide with them [dames and damsels]' (p. 121); there is a while to go before he will 'determine to speak no more of this blessed one until such time as I could treat of her more worthily' (section 43, p. 153). Shelley's verses, as though recalling Dante's shame-faced but all-important recognition that he must engage in 'parole che lodano' (words that praise) (section 18, pp. 56, 57), are invited to engage in a bolder task: first, to assert the Romantic poet's conviction that 'Love's very pain is sweet / But its reward is in the world divine / Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave'; second, to commune with his small circle of friends and, third, to invite them to his own banquet or *convivio*. Shelley brings his poem to a conclusion that backs off from, without condemning the absolutism of, the end of the poem proper. He pays homage to Dante,

25 See Weinberg, 171.

26 P. Magnuson, *Reading Public Romanticism* (Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press, 1998), 4.

27 Weinberg, 171.

but asserts his own individual vision of love. An essential word here is 'builds': love 'builds' a diviner world 'beyond the grave' in the sense of 'constructs.' We are taken back to the epigraph from Emilia Viviani at the head of the poem: 'The loving soul launches beyond creation, and creates for itself in the infinite a world all its own, far different from this dark and terrifying gulf'.'[28] These may have been, as Shelley puts it, 'HER OWN WORDS' (p. 373), but Viviani evidently absorbed Shelley's lessons well, since her 'creates for itself in the infinite a world' anticipates what 'builds' confirms: that any 'world divine' is the product of human desire. Dante has licensed Shelley's instinct - evident as early as *Alastor* - to search 'beyond the grave.' More than this, he has supplied the Romantic poet with a religious language to evoke epiphanies that could be described as secular but are spiritualised or 'idealized' until they mimic a religious intensity. This is not to see Shelley as engaged in another form of 'spilt religion.' Rather, it is to underscore the fact that, in his final years, Shelley, still uncompromisingly opposed to credal belief, has an awareness of religion as poetic in origins.

Adonais towards its close (my second passage) is a remarkable product of a poetic vision which acknowledges that belief has its origins in desire, but is never content with mere scepticism, even as the poem's language is always in touch with the limits of human knowledge. As good a gloss as any on the closing movement of the elegy occurs in a Note to *Hellas* where Shelley, abandoning philosophical or theological explanation, argues, in relation both to the 'origin of evil' and to the 'inextinguishable thirst for immortality':

> That there is a true solution of the riddle, and that in our present state that solution is unattainable by us, are propositions which may be regarded as equally certain; meanwhile, as it is the province of the poet to attach himself to those ideas which exalt and ennoble humanity, let him be permitted to have conjectured the condition of that futurity towards which we are all impelled by an inextinguishable thirst for immortality. Until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, this desire itself must remain the strongest and the only presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every thinking being.[29]

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28 Shelley quotes from Viviani's Italian; the translation in the text is from Reiman and Powers, 373, n.1.

29 Quoted from *Shelley: Poetical Works*, Thomas Hutchinson (ed.), new ed. corr. G. M. Matthews (London. Oxford University Press, 1970), 478f.

In accord with this open-eyed commitment to 'desire,' the conclusion of *Adonais* eloquently answers, without answering, the questions voiced in stanza 21: 'Whence are we, and why are we? Of what scene / The actors or spectators?' (ll. 184-5). These questions are, in a sense, answered. For instance, we are told that 'the pure spirit shall flow / Back to the burning fountain whence it came' (ll. 338-9). And yet there is a revelation, too, of the imaginative chaos out of which the poem is forming its own new world: we watch something coherent being consciously wrested out of wildly diverse materials. The poem is at once Gnostic and Pantheist: matter is scorned in the reference to 'the contagion of the world's slow stain' (l. 356), yet Nature is celebrated when stanza 42 affirms that 'He is made one with Nature' (l. 370); Adonais is absorbed back into an undifferentiated One or all-pervading Power 'Which has withdrawn his being to its own' (l. 376), and yet 'He lives, he wakes' (l. 361), as though granted personal immortality. If he is in Heaven, it is 'an Heaven of Song' (l. 413). All is metaphor, as the poem recognizes, and yet it challenges even its own fictional status by talking with frightening literalness: 'Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?' (l. 469) At the same time the line, like the final stanza, plays off against *The Divine Comedy*, as Alan Weinberg has argued.[30] Its questions echo those that Virgil directs to Dante in the *Inferno*: 'What ails thee, then? Why, why hold back, allowing / such craven fear to harbour in thy breast?' (ll. 121-2). Dante's quest is about to begin; so, too, in a sense, is Shelley's, except that Shelley halts on the threshold of where a modern poet can go. He is left suspended in the dark, fearful vacancy between his poem and 'the abode where the Eternal are' (l. 495). Everywhere, the Dantean echoes remind us that the Romantic poet has only his own 'vitally metaphorical' language on which to rely. Ultimately, through its relationship with Dante's spiritual vision, Shelley's poetry discovers, to its great creative benefit, its own remodelling modernity and sophisticated ambivalence with regard to imaginative desire.

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30 Weinberg, 196.

The Fallen/Unfallen Woman in Manzoni and Dickens

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Both *I promessi sposi* and *Bleak House* allude to, but do not fully respect, the well-established convention of doubling the good, usually fair, heroine with a dark counterpart.[1] Although Manzoni's Lucia and Gertrude are thus constructed, according to Verina R. Jones, 'come antitetiche e identiche al tempo stesso,' the one being the specular negative image of the other, both are dark ladies.[2] In *Bleak House* the corresponding figures are Esther Summerson and Lady Dedlock, who also share the same, probably dark, coloration along with the other features of their resemblance to one another.[3] With regard to the convention, the good or unfallen woman may thereby emerge, paradoxically, as the more transgressive character. Describing the situation in Manzoni, Jones observes: 'è Gertrude, il personaggio ribelle, che si conforma al canone, al quale invece trasgredisce Lucia, timida e sottomessa.'[4] But neither Lucia nor Esther is so entirely timid and submissive, and one of the effects of the association with her double is to enforce in each a guilty impression of her own aggressiveness.

The principle of doubling involves, that is, not only the relationship *between* fallen and unfallen women but the antitheses *within* each woman. Insofar as these figures also typify the general female condition, they imply the difficulty of defining a clear boundary between innocent and

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1 At the conference at which this paper was originally presented, Petra Bianchi also referred interestingly in her paper to the use of the convention in Madame de Staël's *Corinne.*

2 V. R. Jones, *Le dark ladies manzoniane e altri saggi sui* Promessi sposi (Roma. Salerno Editrice, 1998), 97. V. Di Benedetto, *Guida ai* Promessi sposi*: I personaggi, la gente, le idealità* (Milano. Rizzoli, 1999), 104f, also discusses the 'singolare collegamento tra Gertrude e Lucia,' as in the frequent application of the same adjectives and phrases to both of them.

3 Many critics have naturally commented on the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship to the structure of *Bleak House.* Al Hutter, 'The High Tower of His Mind: Psychoanalysis and the Reader of *Bleak House,*' *Criticism,* XIX (1977), 311, finds, for example, that it is 'the thematic core' of the novel.

4 Jones, 100.

guilty females. The sexual misdeed itself may provide a less important indication of guilt than the potentiality for falling that every woman already possesses. As an object of original suspicion, a woman is thus encouraged to distrust her own sexuality and to exercise a constant, policing vigilance over herself.

Before considering the blurring of the unfallen/fallen distinction in the women that have *not* actually committed the misdeed, we may notice the coexisting antitheses within the strictly-speaking guilty Gertrude and Lady Dedlock. At first both appear securely authoritative as rulers over their relatively small communities. Most often styled 'la Signora,' Gertrude has carried the undiminished prestige of her aristocratic origins into the convent and easily awes the nuns, friars and visitors that come into her presence. So too does My Lady Dedlock command in the small and cloistered environment called 'the world of fashion':

> It is not a large world. Relatively even to this world of ours, which has its limits too [...], it is a very little speck. There is much good in it [...]. But the evil of it is, that it is a world wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds [...]. It is a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air. (II)[5]

These commanding women possess, however, more complexity than at first appears, and their unhealthily cloistered environments conceal initially unsuspected skeletons. In the case of Gertrude the dark eyes betray an intensely restless inner consciousness at odds with the external objects on which they gaze:

> Due occhi, neri neri [...] si fissavano talora in viso alle persone, con un'investigazione superba; talora si chinavano in fretta, come per cercare un nascondiglio; in certi momenti, un attento osservatore avrebbe argomentato che chiedessero affetto, corrispondenza, pietà; altre volte avrebbe creduto coglierci la rivelazione istantanea d'un odio inveterato e compresso, un non so che di minaccioso e di feroce: quando restavano immobili e fissi senza attenzione, chi ci avrebbe immaginata una svogliatezza orgogliosa, chi avrebbe potuto sospettarci il travaglio d'un pensiero nascosto, d'una preoccupazione familiare all'animo, e più forte su quello che gli oggetti circostanti. (IX)[6]

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5 References in text are to chapters in Charles Dickens, *Bleak House,* S. Gill (ed.) (Oxford/ New York. OUP, 1996).

6 References in text are to chapters in Alessandro Manzoni, *I promessi sposi* (Milano. Rizzoli, 1949).

Here as elsewhere Gertrude seems modelled, as critics have noticed, on the characterisation of Schedoni in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*,[7] and we might think of certain Byronic heroes too. More than the sin of her sexual fall, the secret that gives her no peace is that of the crime committed to cover up that sin. She has been an accessory to the murder of the *conversa*, the lay sister that had threatened to expose her guilt. The girl, whose body is concealed not far from the convent, seems also to be buried within Gertrude herself, always with her as a virtually visible and audible presence:

> Quante volte al giorno l'immagine di quella donna veniva a cacciarsi d'improvviso nella sua mente, e si piantava lì, e non voleva moversi! Quante volte avrebbe desiderato di vedersela dinanzi viva e reale, piuttosto che averla sempre fissa nel pensiero, piuttosto che dover trovarsi, giorno e notte, in compagnia di quella forma vana, terribile, impassibile! Quante volte avrebbe voluto sentir davvero la voce di colei, qualunque cosa avesse potuto minacciare, piuttosto che aver sempre nell'intimo dell'orecchio mentale il susurro fantastico di quella stessa voce, e sentirne parole ripetute con una pertinacia [...] che nessuna persona vivente non ebbe mai! (X)

That haunting inner presence then becomes associated with the person of Lucia, as the transition of the very next sentence implies: 'Era scorso circa un anno dopo quel fatto, quando Lucia fu presentata alla signora ed ebbe con lei quel colloquio.' To escape the ghost, Gertrude transfers her obsessive, ambiguous attention to Lucia. Her behaviour towards the living girl expresses exactly the fear, the hostility and yet the wish to placate that have motivated her gestures towards the ghost. To win Lucia for herself, Gertrude also separates her from Agnese and becomes a surrogate mother. The thought then of giving comfort to her *protégée* — 'A questa fo del bene' (XVIII) — sometimes consoles her. Yet since Lucia's innocent presence functions as a constant reproach too, Gertrude must finally deliver her, as she has once done with the *conversa,* into the hands of the executioner. With a treacherous last caress, she

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7 In connecting Gertrude and Schedoni, Jones, 104, also notes that the 'ritratto di Schedoni, a giudizio di Mario Praz, [...] è stato il principale canale di distribuzione dello stereotipo della bellezza contaminata nella letteratura europea.' Regarding *The Italian* and *I promessi sposi*, see also Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony,* trans. A. Davidson (Cleveland/ New York. The World Publishing Company, 1963), 170, n. 60.

resembles a perverse shepherdess sending one of her flock away to its doom: Lucia '[è] come la pecora, [che] tremolando senza timore sotto la mano del pastore che la palpa e la strascina mollemente, si volta a leccar quella mano; e non sa che, fuori della stalla, la aspetta il macellaio, a cui il pastore l'ha venduta un momento prima' (XX).

Lady Dedlock acts, in contrast, without treachery when, in an analogous scene, she dismisses her maid Rosa from the household of Chesney Wold, precisely to preserve the girl's innocence. In other respects, however, interesting similarities emerge between the beautiful and dangerous qualities of the two fallen and frequently veiled women. Their magnificent long hair, for example, merits admiration, although we observe only a rebellious lock of Gertrude's dark hair because the nun must wear her veil more constantly. Their fascinating eyes, in falling for the first time upon the eyes of their younger counterparts, also exert similar effects. Esther thus recalls the initial experience of meeting Lady Dedlock's gaze in church: 'Shall I ever forget the rapid beating at my heart, occasioned by the look I met, as I stood up! Shall I ever forget the manner in which those handsome proud eyes seemed to spring out of their languor, and to hold mine! It was only a moment before I cast mine down — released again, if I may say so — on my book' (XVIII). Those eyes can intimate a murderous power too, as the narrator warns the 'young man of the name of Guppy': 'There have been times, when ladies lived in strongholds, and had unscrupulous attendants within call, when that poor life of yours would not have been worth a minute's purchase, with those beautiful eyes looking at you as they look at this moment' (XXIX).

While the life of 'the young man of the name of Guppy' is not actually in danger, responsibility for another young person's death is attributed in part, as has been the case with Gertrude, to Lady Dedlock. The daughter, that is, of Lady Dedlock has had, like Gertrude's *conversa,* to die in order to prevent exposure of the sexual scandal. All too readily accepting the report of her infant daughter's death, My Lady has proceeded to found on the basis of that assurance her subsequent fashionable career. Yet as with Gertrude the secret of the dead body may remain to haunt her almost more obsessively than her guilt for the sexual fall. The spectre that strides in certain weathers along the Ghost's Walk to menace the Dedlock household is that of the dead child.

What Lady Dedlock most dreads comes to pass when that child returns to life in the person of Esther Summerson. Also associated

emblematically with the dead baby of Jenny, the brickmaker's wife, the child is covered and labelled, as it were, with a handkerchief bearing Esther's name. So in brandishing this handkerchief at Esther, in their only meeting as living mother and daughter, Lady Dedlock seems at first to plead with her baby to be again, as she has always considered her, dead. Since recognition of Esther's identity would destroy that of Lady Dedlock, it is clear that the relationship cannot be acknowledged. One or the other of them must be dead, and Lady Dedlock will embrace the necessary guilt of having to suppress Esther: '"Think of your wretched mother,"' she begs, '"conscience-stricken, underneath the mask! Think that the reality is in her suffering, in her useless remorse, in her murdering within her breast the only love and truth of which it is capable!"' (XXXVI). At this point in Manzoni, the desperately torn Gertrude has similarly decided to bear the guilt of sacrificing Lucia, a sort of daughter to her and a sort of reincarnation of the dead *conversa*. The continuing existence of the fallen woman necessitates, in a vampiric pattern, the murder of her unfallen double.

Gertrude and Lady Dedlock are not, however, totally lost souls. As much sinned against as sinning, they are victims whose stories arouse compassion. Although in the Tulkinghorn affair, Lady Dedlock comes to feel like a murderess and imagines the hangman's hands at her throat, she has never incurred any legal guilt. And Gertrude, who has incurred that guilt, is described at least in the first version of the novel as possessing still a remnant of innocence. When Egidio demands of her the sacrifice of Lucia, '[Lei] levò al cielo uno sguardo nel quale brillava momentaneamente un raggio dell'antica innocenza.'[8]

Whereas the fallen women thus preserve something of their better natures, the unfallen women come curiously to recognise fallen qualities within themselves. These qualities belong naturally to their sexuality, of which Lucia begins to become uncomfortably aware in the presence of Gertrude. Separated from her mother, Lucia blushes and responds with confusion to the nun's forthright interrogation about the details of her behaviour with Renzo and Don Rodrigo. To Gertrude it appears evident that Lucia must after all have experienced some attraction in Don Rodrigo

8 From *Fermo e Lucia*, ch. IX, reprinted in Alessandro Manzoni, *La Monaca di Monza* a cura di E. Ghidetti (Roma. Editori riuniti, 1985), 130.

and have subtly encouraged him, and perhaps Lucia starts to doubt herself. She is forced, in an interesting example of the sexual *aveu* that Michel Foucault considers an essential truth-producing technique in western culture, to confess previously unrecognised particulars.[9] In the castle of the *innominato*, the sense of her vulnerability to fearful sexual experiences then grows into a panic that prompts her to beg the Blessed Virgin at any cost to save her. She blames herself for having a sexual nature at all and feels guilt now even in connection with Renzo. Her deep self-dissatisfaction undermines her will to live and probably disposes her to fall ill of the plague. In her case, that is, the plague may typify a moral fall.

As for Esther, the awareness of her fallen nature begins in early childhood when her godmother, like Gertrude a maternal surrogate, teaches her that she is more originally sinful than other little girls. Thereafter her story amounts often to a dialogue between the good, dutiful Esther and the bad, wild Esther — often carried on with the help of a mirror. Here too the bad side naturally involves the sexual nature. While evidently in love from the start with Allan Woodcourt, she must repress the awareness of that love and try to reduce Allan's presence in her narrative. Yet as one part of her continually interrogates the other part, she too practices in many passages the technique of the *aveu*. Far from repressing the guilty secret, passages such as the following betray a desire to produce the truth quite clearly for herself and for her narratee:

> I have forgotten to mention — at least I have not mentioned — that Mr Woodcourt was the same dark young surgeon whom we had met at Mr Badger's. Or, that Mr Jarndyce invited him to dinner that day. Or, that he came. Or, that when they were all gone, and I said to Ada, 'Now, my darling, let us have a little talk about Richard!' Ada laughed and said —
>
> But, I don't think it matters what my darling said. She was always merry. (XIV)

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9 In tracing the significance of the *aveu* back to the Lateran Council of 1215, Michel Foucault finds that the practice comes to occupy 'un rôle central dans l'ordre des pouvoirs civils et religieux' especially in the last three centuries: 'l'aveu est devenu, en Occident, une des techniques les plus hautement valorisées pour produire le vrai' [*Histoire de la sexualité*, I (Saint-Amand. Gallimard, 2000), 78f]. In the course of a long discussion of the technique, Foucault maintains further: 'L'aveu a été, et demeure encore aujourd'hui, la matrice générale qui régit la production du discours vrai sur le sexe' 84.

> And now I must part with the little secret I have thus far tried to keep. I had thought, sometimes, that Mr Woodcourt loved me, and that if he had been richer, he would perhaps have told me that he loved me, before he went away. I had thought, sometimes, that if he had done so, I should have been glad of it. But, how much better it was now, that this had never happened! (XXXV)

The guilty desire that she feels compelled to confess may also have contributed, as in the case of Lucia, to her succumbing to the pestilence that rages in this story too. She believes that she has deserved this scourge, which in altering her face has blessedly saved her from being henceforth the object of any man's sexual desire. The event has released her from original sin: 'I knew,' she writes at this point, 'I was innocent of my birth, as a queen of hers' (XXXVI). And the description of the moment in which she first dares fully to contemplate her new face emphasises her gratitude:

> [I] stood for a moment looking through such a veil of my own hair, that I could see nothing else. Then I put my hair aside, and looked at the reflection in the mirror: encouraged by seeing how placidly it looked at me. I was very much changed [...]. I had never been a beauty, and had never thought myself one, but I had been very different from this. It was all gone now. Heaven was so good to me, that I could let it go with a few not bitter tears, and could stand there arranging my hair for the night quite thankfully. (XXXVI)

Yet the wild and fallen nature remains beneath the new surface, and the remainder of her story concerns repeated and vain efforts to suppress it. She cannot escape the implication that her whole life has been a wicked act of rebellion since she ought to have remained her mother's dead child. After the meeting with her mother, indeed, that spectral child seems uncannily to haunt both of them. In striding along the Ghost's Walk of Chesney Wold,

> my echoing footsteps brought it suddenly into my mind that there was a dreadful truth in the legend of the Ghost's Walk, that it was I, who was to bring calamity upon the stately house, and that my warning feet were haunting it even then. Seized with an augmented terror of myself which turned me cold, I ran from myself and everything. (XXXVI)

Her refusal, however, to accept her destiny as the dead child must finally provoke the death of her mother, which occurs in due course. Esther believes during the harrowing nocturnal chase after the veiled woman that she is pursuing 'Jenny, the mother of the dead child.' In

discovering then that the woman is Lady Dedlock, Esther risks uncomfortable identification again with the baby that has died. But the point now is the reversal — the living child's self-assertive recognition that the mother has died. While interestingly echoing the scene in which Esther has put aside the veil of her own hair to contemplate her own new face, the recognition now concerns the altered face of another: 'I passed on to the gate, and stooped down. I lifted the heavy head, put the long dank hair aside, and turned the face. And it was my mother, cold and dead' (LIX).

Despite the deadly struggle between the fallen and the unfallen women, their two faces emerge, when unveiled, as versions of the same complex female face. *Bleak House* has also narrated stories of the painting and the engravings of that fatal face. Existing in its own ghostly dimension, the painting at Chesney Wold has seemed oddly threatened at certain hours by the shadows of 'threatening hands raised up, and menacing the handsome face with every breath that stirs' (XL). Its troubling, perhaps criminal, beauty may remind us of another enigmatic female portrait too. The *Gioconda* of Leonardo, namely, has likewise seemed in the famous analysis of Pater to unite in a single image the sinful and the saintly, the dead and the living woman:

> She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; [...] and, as Leda, [she] was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary, and all this has been to her but the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has molded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one [...]. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.[10]

Another example of the interpenetration of Italian and English works, Pater's text derives from Leonardo's portrait a universal symbol. To give that symbol, in which the women of Manzoni and Dickens surely participate, an additional resonance — or a final simplicity — we may refer it as well to the Faustian *Ewig-weibliche*. Here too the fusion of the

10 W. Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (New York/ Toronto. The New American Library, 1959), 90.

originally virginal Margarete with Helena of Troy erases all distinction between unfallen and fallen. Precisely in that ambiguous permeability of the boundary between innocence and corruption have the male authors located the transgressive fascination of the female archetype.

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La visita di Garibaldi a Malta ed in Inghilterra: L'euforia collettiva per un eroe scomodo

Abraham Borg

> And there was he that gentle hero, who,
> By virtue and the strength of his right arm,
> Dethroned an unjust king, and then withdrew
> To tend his farm.
>
> *Henry Taylor*

La visita trionfale che Giuseppe Garibaldi fece in Inghilterra nell'aprile del 1864 ebbe come prologo il suo soggiorno a Malta il 23-24 marzo, un atto che lui reputava doveroso verso quell'Isola ed il suo popolo che, per tanto tempo, ed in maniera decisamente calorosa, avevano ospitato molti esuli della fazione liberale italiana dopo i tentativi abortiti dei moti risorgimentali. Le cronache maltesi di quei giorni narrano di un'accoglienza strepitosa da parte della stampa, dell'intellighenzia e dell'alta borghesia locale, nonchè dei filo-garibaldini ancora presenti a Malta e della nutrita comunità inglese che guardava alle imprese dell'eroe italiano con nostalgia romantica, desiderosa di anticipare i tripudi che l'Inghilterra gli avrebbe elargito da lì a pochi giorni.

Il contesto storico maltese

La realtà storico-culturale maltese di quel periodo, in verità di quasi tutto l'Ottocento, si presenta come un quadro composito. Malta è, in effetti, un centro cosmopolita su cui dominano gli influssi italiani ed inglesi. Sono queste due lingue, o meglio queste due culture, che, mantenendosi a stretto contatto con quella indigena, si innestarono in quel crogiuolo di razze e di influenze straniere da cui è uscita la nazione che conosciamo, o che crediamo di conoscere, oggi. Giornali e foglietti in maltese nacquero insieme ad altri in lingua inglese ed italiana. Molti di loro ebbero una vita breve, una presenza effimera, e vennero subito rimpiazzati da altri fogli, anche loro partoriti dall'irrequietezza e dall'entusiasmo del momento. In un interessante saggio sul giornalismo a Malta vengono elencati centottantasei giornali 'che videro la luce a Malta dall'inizio

della dominazione britannica fino al 1870,'[1] e si indicano i nomi di almeno altri ventotto fogli 'dei quali si conosce l'esistenza grazie alla stampa dell'epoca [e che] non sono stati rintracciati.'[2]

La presenza britannica a Malta nelle vesti di potenza coloniale diede luogo alla proliferazione di gazzette, redatte in lingua inglese, che avevano come *raison d'être* la propagazione del protestantesimo, sia a Malta che in tutto il Mediterraneo, e l'esaltazione della potenza dell'Inghilterra definita 'a power the most formidable, the envy and emulation of all, the unrivalled and acknowledged Queen of the Ocean;'[3] altri giornali miravano esclusivamente a perorare quella presenza e rinsaldare 'the ties which happily unite these Islands to the crown of our most gracious sovereign Queen Victoria,'[4] auspicando che un giorno i maltesi si dimostrassero 'anxious to make themselves British in heart and soul;'[5] qualcheduno dichiarava pomposamente che con la diffusione della lingua inglese a Malta si potesse creare 'an English Literature in the Mediterranean, from the straits of Gibraltar to the shores of the Bosphorus, and to the mouths of the Nile.'[6] La presenza di molti esuli italiani sul suolo maltese 'esaltava' i sentimenti liberali di alcuni editori filo-britannici che inneggiavano alla 'glorious cause of the Unity and Independence'[7] in Italia. In verità per gli inglesi si trattava anche di una posizione di comodo perchè gli dava l'occasione di schierarsi apertamente anche contro il clero cattolico e la fazione reazionaria locale. Inoltre la stampa 'inglese' cominciò a preoccuparsi che, accanto alla già fortissima influenza linguistica e culturale italiana fra i maltesi, questa ondata di profughi potesse costituire un ulteriore pericoloso ostacolo alla

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1 B. Fiorentini, 'Il Giornalismo a Malta durante il Risorgimento Italiano' in *Echi del Risorgimento a Malta* (Malta. Comitato della Società 'Dante Alighieri,' 1963), 27. Dall'elenco presentato, i primi cinque giornali nascono nel lasso di tempo che va dal 1803 al 1813; il primo numero del sesto giornale elencato, *Lo Spettatore Imparziale*, porta la data del 23 aprile 1838, mentre il centottantaseiesimo, *La Lince*, viene stampato per la prima volta il 12 dicembre 1870. *cfr.* anche H. Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel (Ho assistito alla metamorfosi di Malta)* Vol. 1 (Malta, 1977), 115.

2 Fiorentini, 27f.

3 *Ibid.*, 82.

4 *Ibid.*, 101.

5 *Ibid.*, 32.

6 *Ibid.*, 82.

7 *Ibid.*, 83.

sostituzione ed al definitivo predominio dell'inglese sull'italiano, anche perchè i maltesi non erano più 'on those friendly terms with the English'[8] come una volta. A questo proposito fa testo il rammarico espresso da Sir Penrose Julyan, uno dei due commissari inviati dal Governo Britannico coll'incarico di studiare il sistema educativo maltese e vagliare bene la possibilità di elevare l'inglese a lingua ufficiale di Malta, perchè, a suo dire, in tanti anni di presenza inglese nell'Isola non era stato fatto niente per disseminare e consolidare la posizione della lingua inglese nelle scuole locali.[9]

I moltissimi giornali stampati in italiano dopo l'abolizione della censura sulla stampa ordinata dal Governo Britannico nel 1836[10] rispecchiavano la complessa situazione politica italiana. Mentre alcuni fogli appoggiavano la causa risorgimentale, altri si schierarono accanitamente contro queste aspirazioni, considerando sovversive e perniciose le idee dei rifugiati anche, ma non solo, per i riflessi negativi che potevano avere sulla realtà politica maltese. L'opposizione a questa concessione non fu soltanto interna ma valicò le sponde di Malta e venne caldeggiata da quei governi assoluti - quello borbonico, l'austriaco ed il pontificio - che osteggiavano le aspirazioni unitarie dei fuorusciti. Essi capirono che con questa concessione, da Malta gli esuli potevano 'lanciare i [loro] fulmini,' come ebbe a sintetizzare Francesco Crispi.[11]

Nella Malta degli anni '60, per limitarci soltanto a quel decennio, venivano stampati giornaletti in vernacolo come *Il-Hatar*, *Bertoldu – Folliet Buffu Seriu Criticu Satiricu Politicu Liberali*, *Il-Gurnal Malti*, *Ix-Xitan Izzop* e *Il Frosta – Gurnalett Satiricu*, accanto ad una nutritissima schiera di fogli redatti in lingua italiana come *Il Portafoglio Maltese*, *Il Mediterraneo*, *Il Furetto*, *Scaramuccia*, *Gazzetta Popolare*, *La Maschera*, *Il Vessillo Maltese*, *Il Guerriero Cattolico*, *La Verità*, *Momo*, *Il Progressista*, *L'Amico Cattolico*, *Il Trionfo della Verità*, *La Luce*, *L'Arte*, *Il Difensore Maltese*, *Il Crepuscolo*, *Idee e Fatti*, *La Voce del Popolo*, *La*

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8 *Ibid.*, 98.

9 P. G. Julyan, *Report on the civil establishments of Malta* (London. W. Clowes & Sons, 1879), 56f. *cfr.* O. Friggieri, *Storia tal-Letteratura Maltija* (Valletta. Klabb Kotba Maltin, 1979), 65f, e Ganado, 101f.

10 *cfr.* Ganado, 113-115, e Fiorentini, 23.

11 L. Schiavone, 'Esuli italiani a Malta durante il Risorgimento' in *Echi del Risorgimento a Malta*, 135.

Torre di Babele, *Il Pungolo*, *Appello al Tribunale Infallibile della Pubblica Opinione*, *L'Emigrazione Maltese*, *Il Cattolico*, *La Patria*, *Il Folletto*, *L'Opinione Pubblica*, *La Croce di Malta*, *Don Basilio* e *L'Eco di Nazareth*. Non così numerosi ma sempre influenti erano i giornali in lingua inglese in quel decennio. Fra questi occorre citare *The Malta Government Gazette*, *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette*, *The Malta Observer*, *The Malta Advertiser*, *Public Opinion*, *The Malta Daily Herald*, *The Daily Advertiser* e *The Anti Observer – a penny paper*.[12] Da questo variegato mosaico di esigenze diverse, a partire da quelle dei maltesi, suddivisi in indipendentisti, anglofili o difensori dell'italianità, gli interessi britannici, mirati a consolidare il potere e difendere il proprio utile in questa piazzaforte mediterranea, nonchè le mire degli italiani, divisi tra liberali, papalini e sostenitori dei Borboni, esce l'immagine di un ambiente che fremeva di una passione settaria ed intransigente, di una faziosità che fa parte del nostro essere maltesi ancora oggi. Giornali che difendevano i proscritti italiani e le loro aspirazioni unitarie, venivano timbrati come 'organi di tutti i carbonari italiani [...] di giacobini, di atei, di massoni;'[13] molti fogli difendevano il potere temporale del Papa, 'Sommo Pontefice, Re indipendente,'[14] scagliandosi contro la 'canaglia rivoluzionaria' che aveva ridotto l'Italia ad una 'fattoria dei cospiratori, la cuccagna dei ladri, la pasciona degli imbroglioni, la baldoria di tutta la canaglia gallonata, bollata, fallita, versipelle e traditrice.'[15] Altri videro nei governi anti-

12 I titoli completi delle testate sono i seguenti: *Il Furetto* – Giornaletto Serio Scherzevole; *Scaramuccia* – Giornale di Letteratura, Belle Arti, Agricoltura, Teatri e Varietà; *Gazzetta Popolare* – Giornaletto Serio-Umoristico; *La Maschera* – Giornaletto Serio-Scherzevole; *Il Guerriero Cattolico* - Giornale della Legittimità; *Momo* – Giornaletto Tragico-Comico; *Il Progressista* – Foglio Politico-Letterario; *L'Amico Cattolico* – Giornale Religioso, Letterario Artistico; *Il Trionfo della Verità* – Foglio Religioso, Politico, Letterario; *La Luce* – Giornale Umoristico-Letterario-Teatrale; *L'Arte* – Periodico Patrio; *Il Crepuscolo* – Giornale Umoristico-Letterario-Teatrale; *Idee e Fatti* – Foglio Politico-Letterario; *Il Pungolo* – Giornaletto Patrio, Drammatico, Solazzevole, Vario; *Appello al Tribunale Infallibile della Pubblica Opinione* – Giornale Politico-Giuridico-Legale-Patrio; *L'Emigrazione Maltese* – Giornale Patrio; *Il Cattolico* – Periodico Patrio Politico Letterario e Vario; *La Patria* – Giornale di Malta; *Il Gazzettino di Malta* – Periodico che fa ridere e che fa piangere; *L'Opinione Pubblica* – Gazzetta di Malta; *La Croce di Malta* – Periodico Patrio Politico Letterario e Vario; *L'Eco di Nazareth* – Periodico Settimanale Sacro All'Amore Della Regina Del Cielo.

13 Fiorentini, 33.

14 *Ibid.*, 93.

15 *Ibid.*, 105.

liberali italiani dei 'veri cannibali verso i diritti dell'umanità,'[16] considerando Ferdinando di Napoli 'il primo tiranno del mondo,'[17] ed il Regno delle Due Sicilie 'luogo di assassini e ladroneggi, luogo di povertà e miseria, luogo di libertinaggio e di vizi.'[18] Questo clima di esacerbata faziosità continuò a prevalere anche dopo il rimpatrio di molti esuli, rincuorati dal felice esito del moto dell'Italia Centrale (1859-1860) e la liberazione delle Due Sicilie, delle Marche e dell'Umbria (1859-1861). I pochi immigrati di fede borbonica che a loro volta cercarono rifugio a Malta dopo la sconfitta rientrarono in patria nel 1863.[19]

Garibaldi a Malta

Garibaldi salpò da Caprera il 19 marzo 1864, il giorno del suo onomastico, creando un allarme generale in Italia perchè si ignorava sia lo scopo della sua partenza che la sua destinazione, tanto che giunse inaspettato a Malta mercoledì 23 marzo a bordo il piroscafo *La Valletta*. La nave della *Peninsular and Oriental Steam Company* era partita da Marsiglia ma aveva cambiato rotta verso Caprera per imbarcare l'illustre eroe ed il suo seguito,[20] ospiti della suddetta compagnia che gli offrì pure il passaggio sul *Ripon* il giorno 24 diretto verso l'Inghilterra dove arrivò domenica 3 aprile.[21] La partenza da Caprera era stata alquanto rocambolesca, perchè, accostandosi all'isola, *La Valletta*

16 *Ibid.*, 35.
17 *Ibid.*, 99.
18 *Ibid.*, 89.
19 E. Michel, *L'isola di Malta focolaio di reazione legittimista 1860-1863*, A.S.M., VII, fascicolo III, (1936), 304-333. *cfr.* Friggieri, 63. Occorre aggiungere che *The Malta Times and Government Gazette* del 24 marzo 1864 parla di circa 200 esuli di fede borbonica che cercarono di aizzare la plebaglia contro Garibaldi. (Vedi nota n. 22).
20 Garibaldi era accompagnato dai figli Menotti e Ricciotti, dal suo medico curante Giuseppe Basile, dai signori Basso e Sonches, dal suo segretario Giuseppe Guerzoni e dal colonnello Chambers dei Liverpool Rifle Volunteers che rappresentava il comitato che aveva organizzato la visita in Inghilterra. *cfr. The Malta Times and United Services Gazette* del 24 marzo 1864.
21 Una volta arrivato a Londra, Garibaldi non mancò di fare visita al presidente della *P & O*, Signor Anderson, lunedì 18 aprile per ringraziarlo dell'ospitalità ricevuta.

> fired two guns, which brought alongside the Guard from the neighbouring island of Maddalena, who inquired the object of their visit. In the meantime two other boats approached the steamer from the other side and in a few moments General Garibaldi and his sons and the few friends who accompanied him were on board.[22]

A Malta il tripudio fu generale e sincero e nulla potè fare la sparuta fazione borbonica per dimostrare la sua disapprovazione.[23] Alla stampa, come era prevedibile, si offrì un'occasione ghiotta. Quella reazionaria continuò con i suoi attacchi sulla falsariga abituale; da sempre Garibaldi veniva bersagliato da epiteti ingiuriosi: 'Giuseppe scassatroni,' 'filibustiere,' 'Nizzardo,' 'il Gambero Progressista,' 'il Gran Ribaldo' (ovvio il gioco di parole), 'Paglicciere,' 'ignorante.'[24] L'altra faccia della medaglia invece lo presentava come 'eroico,' 'eroe magnanimo,' 'l'illustre patriota italiano, il liberatore dei popoli, il nuovo Washington, il soldato, il cittadino, il grande eroe, a cui tutto il mondo riverente s'inchina.'[25] Alla Valletta egli prese dimora all'*Imperial Hotel* in strada Santa Lucia N. 134[26] dove ricevette le visite dei simpatizzanti la causa liberale e delle autorità locali. Disse che andava in Inghilterra 'to obtain the benefit of medical advice, and to pay a debt of gratitude he considers he owes the English people.'[27] Si tratta di una dichiarazione molto importante, fatta appena arrivato a Malta, perchè getterebbe una luce su quelle che potevano essere le sue intenzioni vere. Altri riportano affermazioni più bellicose, fatte poco dopo la sua partenza da La Valletta che risultano in netto

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22 *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette*, 24th March 1864.

23 Il *Malta Times and United Services Gazette*, 24th March 1864, dice che erano circa 200 i fuorusciti siciliani di fede borbonica che cercarono di aizzare la 'marmaglia' ('the rabble'). Il tentativo fallì perchè ci furono 'everywhere loud cheers.'

24 Fiorentini, 87-97. Altri commenti dello stesso tenore apparvero ne *L'Ordine*, *Il-Gurnal Malti*, *Il Cattolico* e *La Patria*.

25 *Ibid.*, 83-96. Altrettanto lusinghieri i commenti nel *Corriere Mercantile Maltese*, *Il Mediterraneo* e *The Maltese Observer*.

26 *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette*, 24th March 1864. *cfr.* anche Ganado, 117.

27 *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette*. Lo stesso giornale, nella sua edizione di giovedì, 7 aprile 1864, citando fonti inglesi conferma questa tesi: 'It is believed that the primary purpose which brings him to England is to obtain the benefit of the best surgical advice and assistance.'

contrasto con quanto aveva appena detto.[28] Che nei circoli governativi inglesi si credette che avesse lo scopo di fare il sobillatore è testimoniato, come si vedrà più avanti, dal suo colloquio con Tennyson, dal modo in cui venne attenagliato dagli organizzatori della sua visita che non gli diedero un attimo di respiro, dall'invito che gli venne fatto di non procedere con la visite progettate nelle città del Nord[29] a causa dell'eccessivo sforzo che rischiava di recargli danno alla sua salute, nonchè dalla sua precipitosa partenza alla volta di Caprera.

La seguente ottava apparve nel *Corriere Mercantile Maltese* dello stesso giorno. Oltre a sottolineare la calorosa accoglienza accordata al cinquantaseienne generale questi versi in italiano inneggiano soprattutto alla fiera ed energica tempra dei maltesi:

Veder bramavi il popolo maltese?
Due soli giorni, e n'hai l'idea compita.
Pronto mai sempre a rovesciar le offese
contro chi a torto il suo disdegno incita,
calmo e severo, energico e cortese,
di cor bollente e sobrio nella vita,
ieri punisce il vile insultatore,
oggi con Garibaldi è tutto cuore.[30]

Ancor più lusinghiera nei confronti di Garibadi è la poesia riportata ne *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette* il giorno dopo, accanto alla succitata poesia già apparsa nel *Corriere Mercantile Maltese*. Il testo, in inglese, è un'ulteriore conferma della cultura anglo-italiana che prevaleva fra l'intellighenzia maltese di quel periodo.

To Garibaldi

Hail! Patriot! Hail and welcome to our shore!
A friend indeed thou art to Freedom's cause!
A victor born to stem oppression's roar

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28 *cfr.* I. Montanelli e M. Nozza, *Garibaldi* (Milano. Rizzoli, 1962), 483f: 'A Guerzoni che gli chiedeva i motivi di quel viaggio, il generale rispose che doveva servire ad assicurare l'appoggio inglese alla liberazione della Grecia, della Polonia e di Venezia: il che significava pressappoco una guerra contemporaneamente contro la Turchia, contro la Russia e contro l'Austria. Un'altra volta disse invece che voleva profittare della questione dello Schleswig-Holstein per suscitare una crociata antitedesca in favore della Danimarca. Con altri parlò vagamente di un raduno al vertice del rivoluzionarismo europeo. Ma forse la risposta più sincera la diede quando dichiarò, genericamente, che "da cosa nasce cosa."'

29 Vedi nota n. 33.

30 *Corriere Mercantile Maltese*, 23 marzo 1864.

And to make Tyrants stoop to honor laws.
Thy truly noble heart, even in the darkest hour
Of gloomy Tyranny's triumphal sway,
Fought daringly to bring in Freedom's power
Until its splendour shine eternally.
Hail, venerable Chieftain Freedom's stay!!
Lift thy sword on high – let not vain alarms
Deter thee in thy course – for victory waits
To crown the trophies of thy daring arms.
Take, then, our humble welcome to this isle!
May peace and honor always be thy due,
And blessings wait thee in our 'fatherland,'
As free men gratefully we welcome you.

Malta, 23rd March, 1864.[31]

Il tenore del testo risulta molto vicino agli scritti della stampa londinese che descrisse ed elogiò le imprese del 'venerable chieftain' in termini che rasentavano l'adulazione. Anche lì, come si vedrà, Garibaldi venne salutato come il paladino della libertà, il nobile e vittorioso eroe, acerrimo nemico di tutti i tiranni.

Seguirono, come era prevedibile, i soliti discorsi di rito, gli indirizzi di benvenuto[32] e le immancabili repliche da parte del Generale:

> I maltesi dovrebbero molto amarmi, perchè molto li ho sempre amati, per la loro ospitalità a pro dei fratelli italiani e per il loro eroismo storico.

E ancora

> Mando una parola d'addio e di riconoscenza alla brava popolazione maltese, e l'accerto che giammai nella mia vita oblierò la fraterna accoglienza di cui volle onorarmi.[33]

Fra le presenze più assidue spiccano quelle del Barone e la Baronessa Testaferrata Abela, di Ramiro Barbaro e Ruggiero Sciortino, del Generale Nicola Fabrizi e del maltese Emilio Sceberras, figlio del patriota, Camillo. A questi ultimi due toccò fare gli onori di casa e presentare i moltissimi

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31 *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette* di giovedì, 24 marzo 1864.

32 Il compito di leggere il discorso di benvenuto scritto da Ramiro Barbaro e firmato da oltre tre cento maltesi venne affidato alla Baronessa Angelica Testaferrata Abela. *cfr.* Ganado, 117. Un altro discorso venne pronunciato dal consigliere Ruggiero Sciortino. *cfr.* Friggieri, 64. Vedi anche *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette,* 31st March 1864.

33 *cfr.* anche O. Friggieri, *Storia della Letteratura Maltese* (Milazzo. Edizioni Spes, 1986), 68.

ammiratori che desideravano porgergli i loro omaggi.[34] Tanto era l'interesse che suscitò questa visita che le gazzette locali continuarono a seguire con attenzione le vicissitudini 'londinesi' di quel soldato, riportando le citazioni più entusiastiche da giornali inglesi.[35]

Garibaldi e Malta

Che Garibaldi avesse stima dei maltesi, a parte la solita retorica che accompagna eventi come quello appena accennato, risulta già da un episodio da lui raccontato nelle sue *Memorie*. Nel 1837 si trovava in America del Sud, dalle parti di Montevideo, quando la sua nave, la *Farropilha*, venne attaccata da due lance della Repubblica Orientale dell'Uruguay. Fu uno scontro cruento; il timoniere, Giacomo Fiorentino, stramazzò in terra, colpito da una palla alla testa.

> Il timone rimase abbandonato: ed io, che mi trovavo a far fuoco vicino allo stesso, ne presi la barra. In quell'atto una palla nemica mi colpì nel collo, e stramazzai privo di sensi.
>
> Il resto del combattimento, che durò circa un'ora, fu sostenuto principalmente dal nostromo Luigi Carniglia, dal pilotino Pasquale Lodola, e marinari: Giovanni Lamberti, Maurizio Garibaldi, due maltesi *ecc.* Gli italiani, meno uno, combatterono valorosamente. Gli stranieri, ed i neri liberti, in numero cinque, si salvarono nella stiva.[36]

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34 Ganado, 117. *cfr.* anche *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette*, 31st March 1864.

35 *cfr. The Malta Times and United Services Gazette* del 14, 21 e 28 aprile 1864. Nella sua rubrica 'Telegraphic Despatches,' il *Malta Times* [...] del 14 aprile scrive: 'Garibaldi has been invited by the municipal bodies of Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Newcastle. Gladstone, Clanricade, Hartlepool, Newcastle have also sent him invitations.' L'edizione del 21 aprile riporta la seguente citazione dal *Times* di Londra del 11 aprile: 'Garibaldi has arrived. No similar spectacle and rejoicings were ever witnessed here before. The Association of Workmen with flags and bands of music lined the streets during the entry of Garibaldi. All the houses were decorated,' e commenta così l'edizione del 12 aprile del giornale londinese: 'The *Times* says that the enthusiasm for Garibaldi cannot fail to exercise powerful influence over the evils which are still oppressing Italy.'

36 G. Garibaldi, *Memorie* (Torino. Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1975), 28. *cfr.* Montanelli e Nozza, *Garibaldi*, 88-94.

Per lui i due maltesi, di cui si ignorano i nomi, erano italiani a tutti gli effetti. Come si erano aggregati alla ciurma garibaldina è un mistero. La spiegazione più plausibile è che loro facessero parte di quel gruppo di maltesi che partirono per Grenada ed il Guyana Britannico verso la fine degli anni Trenta e che poi cercarono fortuna più a sud.[37] Più tardi, quando egli tornò in Europa trovò che altri maltesi si erano schierati a favore della causa risorgimentale italiana: Giuseppe Pace, Camillo Sceberras, Mattia Camilleri, Benedetto Pisani Mompalao, Giuseppe Xuereb, Giuseppe Camenzuli e Giorgio Balbi per fare qualche nome. Il Camenzuli e il Balbi fecero parte della piccola spedizione che nel 1860 partì da Malta alla volta di Pozzallo per consegnare al Generale le armi raccolte e custodite a Malta da oltre dieci anni.[38]

Barbaro, Sceberras, Testaferrata e Fabrizi sono personaggi che, con qualche piccola variazione nel nome, ritornano a vivere ottanta anni dopo nel romanzo *Meta Nharaq it-Tijatru* di Guzè Galea, scritto nell'immediato dopoguerra in un clima di risentimento anti-italiano per i vari *blitz* che Malta aveva subito durante il conflitto mondiale qualche anno prima. Il problema dell'italianità e della lingua si era trascinato fino agli anni '30 e lo schieramento dell'Italia a fianco della Germania nazista aveva inasprito gli animi a tal punto che nella stampa filo-britannica si cominciò a demonizzare quei maltesi che erano conosciuti come simpatizzanti dell'italianità di Malta, chiamandoli *quislings* per tacciarli di tradimento.[39] In seguito alcuni di loro, incluso qualche discendente dei Testaferrata e degli Sceberras di garibaldina memoria, vennero internati in Uganda. Si giunse al punto di chiedere la messa al bando perfino della musica italiana alla radio[40] o in manifestazioni pubbliche, mentre ad Antonio Nani, l'organizzatore dei concerti del *British Institute*, venne contestata la scelta dei brani musicali da eseguire durante le varie serate. Sia lui che altri dovettero adeguarsi e per mesi interi non si sentirono

37 Ringrazio il Dottor Albert Ganado per questa informazione. Le notizie di queste emigrazioni verso l'America Centrale apparvero nelle prime edizioni de *Il Portafoglio Maltese* a partire dal 1838.

38 V. Bonello, 'Echi del Risorgimento a Malta' in *Echi del Risorgimento a Malta*, 14.

39 'Ghawdex bejta ta' *Quislings*' ('Gozo covo di traditori') in *Il-Berqa* del 3 agosto 1942.

40 In una lettera ne *Il-Berqa* del 6 agosto 1942 si chiede perchè la filodiffusione insiste ripetutamente sulla *Carmen* di Bizet quando ci sono altre opere francesi come *Faust*, *Mignon*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Mignon* ed altre. Di opere italiane neanche l'ombra.

più Verdi, Donizetti, Rossini ed altri musicisti italiani, mentre, stranamente, si continuò ad inserire le overture di Wagner nel repertorio dei concerti musicali.[41] Pur di non utilizzare vocaboli italiani si preferì addirittura a parlare di *Elisir ta' l-imhabba* o *L'Elixir d'amour*, senza dare il nome del musicista, per indicare il capolavoro donizettiano![42] In questo clima di animosità contro l'Italia fascista si ricorse all'eroe mitico del passato per dichiarare che lui avrebbe considerato Mussolini l'obbrobrio della sua patria. L'articolista ricorda l'opposizione che Mussolini fece a Giolitti, che allora aveva dichiarato guerra alla Turchia, perchè, con ogni probabilità, il futuro duce sentiva ancora l'influenza di Mazzini che, nel suo saggio 'Doveri alla patria' aveva delimitato i confini dell'Italia. Adesso, il pacifista del 1911 ha dimenticato il credo politico mazziniano ed ha varcato quei limiti facendo sì che soldati italiani diventassero mercenari hitleriani al nord e prigionieri degli inglesi oltre il Mediterraneo. Mazzini amava l'Inghilterra che gli aveva dato asilo politico. Anche quell'amico fraterno del grande statista,

> [...] the Italian patriot and soldier [...] left his curse on any Italian that should wage war against England. To Garibaldi's curse may be added that of Mazzini.[43]

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41 *The Times of Malta* 04.08.1940, 4. Vedi anche *TOM* 19.05.1941, 20.05.1941, 23.05.1941, 27.05.1941, 21.04.1942. Un concerto del *British Institute* tenuto il 2 ottobre 1942 presenta, come pezzo di chiusura l'Overture dai *Meistersingers* (Vedi *TOM*, 06.10.1942, 3). In un altro concerto tenuto il 4 dicembre 1942 figura l'Idillio dal *Siegfried* (Vedi *TOM*, 10.12.1942, 3).

42 Vedi *The Times of Malta*, 23rd December 1940. L'opera venne data in maltese, con traduzione di A. German, il 6 gennaio 1941. Qualcosa riesce a sfuggire questa ferrea vigilanza. All'*Orpheum Theatre* di Gzira viene proiettato il film dei *Pagliacci* di Leoncavallo il 26 febbraio 1942 con Richard Tauber. Un concerto del *British Institute* del 20 marzo 1942 presenta due sonate di Scarlatti. Il critico del *Times* ci informa che 'We never rise to great heights with Scarlatti – we are charmed but not uplifted.' Segue l'8 maggio 1942 in un altro concerto del *B.I.* l'overture del *William Tell* di Rossini. Dal 1943 comincia a prevalere il buon senso. In un *Festival of Music* tenuto dal 8 al 16 gennaio vengono presentati, il giorno 15, alcuni brani da *La bohème*. Durante un programma radiofonico dell'*Information Office Broadcasts* di domenica, 28 febbraio 1943 vengono eseguiti pezzi da *La traviata*, *Aida*, *Pagliacci*, *Don Pasquale*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Parigina* e *La bohème*. Per la commemorazione della festa maltese dell'8 settembre, nonchè dell'armistizio, la banda *Count Roger* di Rabat esegue un programma che include musiche di Puccini, Boito e Ponchielli!

43 'Mazzini-Garibaldi-Mussolini' in *The Times of Malta*, 17th September 1942, 2.

Il tema della maledizione di Garibaldi su chi osasse fare guerra all'Inghilterra viene ripreso in un altro articolo di qualche mese dopo, 'Garibaldi's Curse,' che cita il discorso tenuto dallo storico inglese G. M. Trevelyan il 26 giugno 1943 ad Aberdovey, inneggiante allo spirito di avventura, coraggio, patriottismo ed abnegazione che animava l'Eroe dei Due Mondi:

> Garibaldi laid a solemn curse on any Italian who should ever fight against England, the champion of Italy's freedom and the world's. That curse was now falling on Mussolini, the man who had for the last twenty years been trying by force to educate the Italian people out of the humane and liberal ideals of Garibaldi into a despotic and cruel creed of his own invention.[44]

Licenza storica

Il romanzo *Meta Nharaq it-Tijatru* ripropone come tema centrale la lotta fra le due fazioni italiane, la risorgimentale e la borbonica, con il conseguente coinvolgimento dei simpatizzanti maltesi alle due cause, e fa di Malta un'isola di intrighi e di sotterfugi, piena di fomentatori di discordia che, malgrado avessero goduto l'ospitalità sincera dei maltesi,

> questi stranieri hanno sempre ripagato con il male il bene che avevano ricevuto, ci hanno disprezzato e colmato di ridicolo; molti di loro hanno cercato di intromettersi negli affari interni del paese, altri hanno voluto imporci la loro volontà, riempire la nostra mente con idee strane; qualcheduno ha addirittura cercato di seminare l'odio tra di noi, di obbligarci a rinnegare o abborrire tutto quello che è nostrano per poter comandare in casa nostra.[45]

Per quasi tutta la trama è la fazione risorgimentale che gode le maggiori simpatie dei maltesi, soprattutto perchè con i liberali si era schierata apertamente la prima stella del teatro dell'opera de La Valletta. La fazione opposta non può fare altro che cercare di eliminarla dalle scene per poter proporre un loro soprano capace di accapparrarsi le simpatie e l'adesione dei maltesi alla causa del Borbone! A detta del consigliere dello spodestato re Francesco

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44 'Garibaldi's Curse' in *The Times of Malta*, 19th July 1943, 2. Va ricordato che l'eminente storico inglese George Macauly Trevelyan (1876-1962) aveva scritto un interessante resoconto dell'impresa garibaldina, *Garibaldi and the Thousand* (Longmans. Green and Co. Ltd., 1909).

45 G. Galea, *Meta Nharaq it-Tijatru (Il rogo del teatro)* (Malta. Lux Press, 1946), 22.

> Garibaldi conquistò Napoli con il sostegno dell'Inghilterra, ma l'Inghilterra non avrebbe agito se non fosse per il lavoro di persuasione svolto dai nostri nemici a Malta. Come l'Inghilterra aprì le porte di Napoli a Garibaldi essa può estrometterlo e riportare Vostra Signoria sul trono dei Suoi avi. Basterebbe aprire gli occhi a Lord Palmerston per trarre gli inglesi dalla nostra parte.'[46]

Il fulcro di questo piano è Malta. Bisogna rinsaldare la posizione borbonica nell'Isola per arrivare agli inglesi, eliminare l'asso nella manica degli esuli liberali e rimpiazzarlo con la beniamina del pubblico della Scala di Milano. Per ripicca i garibaldini incendieranno il teatro, donde il titolo del romanzo, che vorrebbe che le sorti dell'Italia si decidano a Malta a suon di acuti e di gorgheggi! La conclusione del libro sottolinea la decisione di un governo inetto che finalmente decide di agire e 'pulire la vita di Malta dal pericolo politico,'[47] bandendo tutti i facinorosi stranieri, (leggi italiani), dal soglio maltese. Con la partenza precipitosa dall'Isola degli italiani, sia garibaldini sia borbonici, si chiude una brutta pagina e si apre un nuovo capitolo.

Sennonchè in questo scenario fantasioso è la storia che ci rimette, mentre la reputazione di alcuni dei personaggi che avevano vissuto quella realtà esce abbastanza offuscata. Dalla visita di Garibaldi nel 1864 all'incendio che distrusse il nuovo Teatro Reale il 25 maggio 1873 passano nove anni.[48] Storicamente è stato accertato che degli esuli italiani a Malta non era rimasto quasi nessuno neanche al tempo dell'arrivo del generale ed il suo seguito, figuriamoci nel 1873.[49] Il romanzo inoltre pone in risalto un immaginario *débâcle* che Garibaldi dovette subire mentre si recava al porto per partire sul *Ripon* alla volta dell'Inghilterra, una tremenda sassaiola organizzata dai borbonici ed i loro tirapiedi che, oltre a far perdere la faccia alla fazione risorgimentale, fece il giro dei capitali europei e che portò alla definitiva eclissi di quell'eroe:

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46 *Ibid.*, 24.

47 *Ibid.*, 157.

48 Domenica, 25 maggio 1873, alle ore 21.00 scoppiò un incendio durante la prova di *La vergine del castello*, un nuovo melodramma del musicista siracusano Giuseppe Privitera, che ridusse in cenere sia il teatro che il manoscritto dell'opera. *cfr.* anche U. Rolandi, *Musica e musicisti in Malta*, A.S.M., (Livorno, 1932), 27.

49 Michel, 304-333, e *Emigrati borbonici a Malta 1864-1866*, A.S.M., II, fascicolo IV, (1931), 210-212. *cfr.* anche Friggieri, *Storja tal-Letteratura Maltija* (1979), 64.

> Le conseguenze dell'accoglienza accordata a Garibaldi a Malta furono sentite non solo nell'isola, ma in tutta Europa. Dopo le sue vittorie in Italia, Garibaldi era considerato come uomo di capacità eccezionali, tenuto in grandissima stima e temuto da tutti, ma dopo lo smacco che dovette subire a Malta l'incantesimo si spezzò, e mentre si continuava a considerarlo un generale vittorioso nessuno lo stimava più un essere soprannaturale. [...]. Dopo la sua partenza da questa isola molti giornali lo dimenticarono [...]. La sommossa maltese aveva scosso quel generale [...] e diede nuova speranza ai nemici che lui aveva spodestato.[50]

Inoltre il piano di dare fuoco al Teatro Reale nel romanzo viene addebitato ad un garibaldino di ferro dal nome fittizio di Fabrzio Fabrizi, ma con l'ovvio riferimento a uno dei quattro fratelli Fabrizi, Nicola, Paolo, Luigi e Carlo, tutti patrioti italiani, che erano arrivati a Malta a partire dal 1834. Pare che fossero titolari della ditta Carlo Fabrizi e Fratelli che 'era munita di un cifrario segreto e, probabilmente di una tipografia clandestina.'[51] Due di loro, Carlo e Paolo, morirono prima dello sbarco dei Mille a Marsala; Luigi, che era partito da Malta da molti anni, morì nel 1865, e Nicola, il più illustre dei fratelli e che Garibaldi reputava 'un amico degno di fede,'[52] dopo una vita avventurosa, ritornò a Malta un mese prima dell'arrivo di Garibaldi, e dopo averlo accolto con i suoi amici, partì per sempre dall'Isola il 3 maggio 1864.[53] Si trattava di gente stimatissima dai maltesi, altro che incendiari. Altri personaggi menzionati nel libro vengono presentati come cospiratori, fanatici sostenitori di Garibaldi e dell'unità d'Italia che si sentivano più italiani che maltesi.[54]

Garibaldi in Inghilterra

Garibaldi ed il suo seguito partirono da Malta il 24 marzo 1864 diretti verso Southampton dove arrivarono domenica 3 aprile.[55] Era la

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50 Galea, 110f.

51 Schiavone, 139.

52 Garibaldi, 310, vedi anche 386: '[...] il 10 giugno 1866 giungeva in Caprera il mio amico generale Fabrizi ad invitarmi per parte del governo, e dei nostri, a prendere il comando dei volontari, che numerosi si riunivano in ogni parte d'Italia.'

53 *cfr.* Schiavone, 137-141.

54 Galea, 31.

55 A chi aveva chiesto a Garibaldi che sarebbe potuto arrivare in Inghilterra per una via più breve egli rispose che 'mai più avrebbe messo piede sul suolo francese.' Vedi */cont....*

quarta volta che lui approdava sul suolo inglese. Il tripudio fra il popolo fu generale, l'entusiasmo alle stelle; i politici, in verità, erano meno contenti perchè non sapevano cosa avesse in mente quell'italiano eccentrico. Si era dimostrato capace di tutto e perciò una miriade di supposizioni turbava la loro proverbiale flemma inglese. Che questo paladino della libertà, nemico dei tiranni, fosse arrivato in Inghilterra per assicurarsi l'appoggio per qualche causa disperata? Contro chi aveva intenzione di pronunciarsi? Chi era il suo prossimo bersaglio? Al suo segretario Guerzoni aveva parlato in privato della liberazione della Grecia, della Polonia, di Venezia e persino del problema della Danimarca. Ma non si era sbottonato con nessuno. Palmerston ed i suoi ministri erano certi che sarebbero arrivate le rimostranze di quei governi che si sentivano minacciati; che qualcheduno avrebbe protestato comunque. Era dunque necessario fargli sapere quale era il terreno minato. Da Southampton Garibaldi venne portato all'Isola di Wight, ospite del deputato liberale Charles Seely, dove ebbe l'occasione di incontrare alcuni personaggi importanti fra cui William Gladstone, il Duca di Shaftesbury, il poeta Alfred Tennyson ed una sua vecchia conoscenza, Giuseppe Mazzini. L'incontro con Tennyson, che era anche il poeta di corte, ci dà un'idea precisa di cosa pensassero veramente gli inglesi del Generale e getta una luce sulla posizione ufficiale riguardo a quella visita. Egli invitò Garibaldi a casa sua, a Farringford, poco lontano dai Seely, estendendo l'invito anche ad alcuni amici che avrebbero gradito l'incontro con l'eroe tanto osannato. Per i Tennyson, sostenitori del Risorgimento, si trattava di un'occasione unica, 'the great event of the year.'[56] Le strade, ed era solo il preludio di quello che sarebbe accaduto di lì a pochi giorni a Londra ed in Cornovaglia, erano piene di gente desiderosa di dare il benvenuto

> [...] as Garibaldi passed thro' the village to Farringford. People on foot and on horseback and in carriages had waited at our gate two hours for him. Some rushed forward to shake hands with him. He stood up and bowed. A. [Alfred] and I and the boys were in the portico awaiting his arrival.[57]

/*cont. The Malta Times and United Services Gazette* di martedì, 31 marzo 1864. Egli manifestò gli stessi sentimenti anti-francesi durante il suo colloquio con Lord Tennyson a Farringford, nell'Isola di Wight.

56 H. Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson, A Memoir* (London. Macmillan, 1899), 417. Il capitolo XXIV inizia con la frase: 'My father was always an enthusiast for Italian freedom.'

57 *Ibid.* È la signora Tennyson che scrive il passo citato.

Dopo l'incontro con gli altri ospiti, fra cui anche qualcuno che aveva conosciuto prima, il generale ed il poeta si ritirarono per parlare di politica '[...] A. [Alfred] advising the General not to talk politics in England.'[58] Tennyson dunque consigliò Garibaldi di evitare qualsiasi accenno alla politica e, a giudicare dalla lettera che egli scrisse al Duca di Argyll, l'italiano pare che avesse rassicurato il suo ospite delle sue intenzioni:

> I ventured to give him a little advice: he denied that he came with any political purpose to England, merely to thank the English for their kindness to him, and the interest they had taken in himself and all Italian matters, and also to consult Ferguson [*sic*] about his leg.[59]

Alla luce di come si svolsero i fatti una volta Garibaldi giunse a Londra, e la sua precipitosa partenza per Caprera, queste dichiarazioni aquistano un'importanza notevole. Per molti egli rappresentava qualcosa di speciale, un eroe d'altri tempi. La signora Tennyson lo trovava

> A most striking figure [...]. His face very noble, powerful, and sweet, his forehead high and square. Altogether he looked one of the great men of our Elizabethan age. His manner was simple and kind.[60]

Egualmente gentile, forte, eroico nella sua lotta contro la tirannia, ma disarmante nella sua semplicità, lo descrisse il poeta Henry Taylor, ospite dei Tennyson a Farringford in quel giorno memorabile:

> And there was he that gentle hero, who,
> By virtue and the strength of his right arm,
> Dethroned an unjust king, and then withdrew
> To tend his farm.
>
> To whom came forth a mighty man of song,
> Whose deep-mouth'd music rolls thro' all the land,
> Voices of many rivers, rich or strong,
> Or sweet or grand.[61]

Anche Tennyson rimase incantato dal suo nobile portamento e dalla sua 'divina semplicità.'

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58 *Ibid.*, 418.

59 *Ibid.*, 419. Viene riprodotta la lettera di Tennyson al Duca di Argyll.

60 *Ibid.*, 417.

61 Henry Taylor (1800-1886), era un poeta inglese, autore anche di quattro tragedie di stile shakespeariano: *Isaac Comnenus* (1827), *Philip van Artevelde* (1834), *Edwin the fair* (1842) e *St. Clement's Eve* (1862).

> What a noble human being! I expected to see a hero and I was not disappointed. One cannot exactly say what Chaucer says of the ideal knight, 'As meke he was of port as is a maid'; he is more majestic than meek, and his manners have a certain divine simplicity in them [...].[62]

Alla moglie pare che il poeta avesse aggiunto in privato 'That in worldly matters he [Garibaldi] seemed to have the "divine stupidity of a hero."'[63] Durante il loro breve colloquio Tennyson fece sfoggio dal suo italiano, citando il Manzoni, e Garibaldi replicò con brani da *I Sepolcri* del 'suo' Foscolo, a cominciare da 'Il navigante che veleggio.'[64] Prima di accommiatarsi dal suo ospite il Generale piantò un albero commemorativo nel giardino di Farringford che nel giro di pochi giorni venne mutilato di due rami, '[...] and which is obliged to be guarded from the people of England by a rural policeman.'[65]

Garibaldi giunse a Londra l'11 aprile dove l'aspettava una folla immensa che gli fece un'accoglienza tanto strepitosa da lasciare sbalorditi un po' tutti:

> Since England became a nation, there never sounded forth such a thunder-peal of welcome to any stranger, whether of high or low degree, as that which the hero of Marsala and the wounded soldier of Aspromonte has been received.[66]

Nei giornali si diede risalto alla semplicità maestosa e l'imponenza morale del suo carattere, alla sua capacità di toccare le più recondite emozioni, di esercitare una fortissima influenza magica su tutti; egli era l'eroe indomito che suscitava l'ammirazione appassionata di tutte le classi sociali, il patriota magnanimo dell'Italia, il cui nome era simbolo di unità nazionale, indipendenza e libertà, l'uomo semplice ma di qualità eccezionali:

> Courage that never vaunts itself, but, when occasion calls, calmly dares any extremity of danger; energies that are ever seeking to expend themselves upon an object worthy of them; unquenchable love of liberty; devotion to his country, the purest and most unelfish; a heart as remarkable for tenderness as for magnanimity; and a

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62 Tennyson, 419, citata dalla lettera di Tennyson al Duca di Argyll.

63 *Ibid.*, 418.

64 In altre occasioni della sua vita avventurosa Garibaldi si mise a declamare citazioni da *I Sepolcri*. *cfr. Memorie*, 29.

65 *cfr. The Illustrated London News*, N. 1256, Vol. XLIV, Saturday, 23rd April 1864, 403.

66 *Ibid.*, 381.

> lofty superiority to everything which addresses itself to the more sordid side of human nature [...] a soul glowing with the intensest moral life.[67]

Per sottlineare ulteriormente il grande carisma di Garibaldi venne messa a confronto la tradizionale impassibilità, freddezza e riservatezza degl'inglesi, vere caratteristiche o luoghi comuni che siano, con l'entusiasmo spontaneo ed irrefrenabile con cui tutto il popolo accolse il Generale dovunque egli mise piede in quei giorni.

> We are a people of somewhat cold exterior, not readily excited, generous for the most part, in our sympathies, but reserved in our expression of them. [...] when such an impassive nation starts up unbidden, as one man, and pours out in unrestrained freedom its inmost feelings, the effect is overwhelming. Garibaldi has touched the usually hidden spring of our national emotion as no man ever touched it before [...].[68]

Egli prese dimora dal Duca di Sutherland che per giorni interi lo fece scorrazzare tutta Londra e i dintorni, seguendo l'itinerario stabilito da Seely ed il comitato organizzativo. Ricevette la visita di molti personaggi importanti desiderosi di fare la sua conoscenza, le deputazioni di varie loggie massoniche e di fuorusciti politici, alcuni compagni dei moti del 1860, come i tre fratelli Platt, ed una delegazione di danesi residenti in Inghilterra che gli esposero la situazione triste in cui versava il loro paese ed ai quali egli assicurò il suo sostegno. Visitò impianti agricoli, stazioni ferroviarie, birrerie, gli uffici della *P. & O*, circoli elitari, e molti cittadini privati, fra cui anche Florence Nightingale. Al *Crystal Palace* si radunò una folla di circa trentamila persone, per la maggior parte italiani, per tributargli onori ed omaggi. In quella circostanza Garibaldi abbandonò il riserbo che aveva assunto in tutti i discorsi tenuti durante le manifestazioni ufficiali, memore, forse, del parere, o meglio, dell'avvertimento, di Tennyson, e mentre ringraziava gli inglesi per tutti gli aiuti dati alla causa dell'unità d'Italia, invitò i suoi connazionali ad imitarli nel loro amore imperituro per la libertà, e, prendendo lo spunto dal pericolo che incombeva sulla Danimarca, si lanciò in un attacco contro l'Austria e la Prussia, colpevoli di voler tenere una nazione piccola e indifesa sotto il loro giogo. Fu un'occasione memorabile per molti, e venne seguita da un'altra visita al *Palace*, questa volta a beneficio della borghesia e della

67 *Ibid.*, 382.
68 *Ibid.*

classe operaia inglese che, come si suol dire, andò in paradiso. Come in tutte le altre occasioni il popolo lo acclamò con sincero entusiasmo; voleva che Garibaldi fosse 'suo' e non l'appannaggio dei nobili e dei ricchi. Ricevette oltre sessanta indirizzi, rivoltigli da quell'assemblea festosa ed entusiasta. Oltre ad avere una venerazione per Ugo Foscolo, alla cui tomba, a Chiswick, fece pellegrinaggio giovedì 21 aprile, Garibaldi era un patito del melodramma italiano e presenziò alle rappresentazioni della *Norma* a *Covent Garden* e della *Lucrezia Borgia* al *Her Majesty's Theatre.*[69] Storie di abbandoni e tradimenti al veleno, foriere di oscuri presagi! Non lo portarono invece a vedere il *Guglielmo Tell*, in scena al *Royal Italian Opera* sabato 16 aprile, un dramma sicuramente più consone all'indole dell'Eroe dei Due Mondi. Fu proprio quello stesso sabato che egli denunziò l'Austria davanti ai suoi concittadini radunati al Palazzo di Cristallo. Forze occulte al lavoro?

L'Inghilterra dunque era in festa per la presenza di questo eroe d'altri tempi, paladino della libertà. Garibaldi era sulla bocca di tutti; piovvero inviti e seguirono parate, feste e cerimonie. Infuriava la moda per i *garibaldies*, il nome con cui erano conosciuti sia i biscotti all'uva sultanina sia le camicette o bluse rosse per signora; *Garibaldi* era il sapone da barba più richiesto. *Metzler & Co.* di Great Marlborough Street vendeva 'Garibaldi's Song *On follow me* by George Linley,' nuova edizione, 'with splendid illustration,' per la modica somma di due scellini e sei pence, e *Duff and Hodgson* di Oxford Street reclamizzava '*Garibaldi's Triumphal March*, for the piano, by Stephen Glover [...] this admirable march, in honour of the great Italian patriot, is played by all military bands.'[70] A pochi passi, a New Bond Street, *Chappell and Co.* offriva musica garibaldina per tutti i gusti, a cominciare da varie versioni di *Garibaldi's Hymn*, un *Garibaldi's March* ed un entusiasmante *Garibaldi's Galop* in versione per solista, duetto, sestetto ed orchestrale, 'beautifully illustrated with a portrait of the great General.' Ma queste manifestazioni di euforia collettiva non furono gradite da tutti. Qualcuno, come la regina Vittoria, torse il naso; qualche potente *lobby* cercò di esercitare pressione sul governo inglese affinchè rispedisse repentinamente l'ospite tra le roccie

69 La *Norma* venne rappresentata a *Covent Garden* giovedì, 14 aprile e *Lucrezia Borgia* martedì, 19 aprile al *Her Majesty's Theatre.*

70 *cfr. The Illustrated London News*, 404.

di Caprera, 'to tend his farm,' per dirla 'poeticamente' alla Taylor. Sta di fatto che le trentadue visite che doveva fare al nord dell'Inghilterra ed in Scozia vennero annullate di colpo e che invece lui si recò in Cornovaglia per incontrare il suo compagno d'armi, il Colonello John Peard, conosciuto anche come 'Garibaldi's Englishman,'[71] prima di lasciare definitivamente i suoi ospiti e ritornare a casa. In parlamento l'opposizione accusò il governo di cedimento alle pressioni interne ed esterne. La notizia rimbalzò immediatamente a Malta:

> We learn that Garibaldi is to go back to Caprera, and was to embark on Tuesday 26th April in the Duke of Sutherland's yacht. This sudden resolve to leave England, without fulfilling his intended visit to the provinces, has given rise to a rumour, which obtained publicity in *The Morning Star* and *Daily News*, that the General had been induced by the Government to hasten his departure as a concession to the Emperor of the French.[72]

Sia Palmerston che Clarendon cercarono di smentire che erano state fatte rimostranze alle autorità inglesi, e che 'John Bull had been frightened by Louis Napoleon, and Garibaldi was "ordered" to quit England.'[73] Anche il deputato Seely, da cui il Generale si era trasferito, negò strenuamente adducendo il parere del Professor Fergusson che nella fatica mentale in cui si trovava l'ospite, causa i suoi moltissimi impegni, continuare con il programma stabilito sarebbe stato fatale. Che in verità la diagnosi dell'esaurimento fosse dettata da ragioni di stato, un escamotage per tenerlo lontano dai lavoratori, non è difficile constatarlo perchè il Dottor

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71 Il Colonello John Peard si era unito ai *Cacciatori delle Alpi* che, nel 1859, parteciparono alla Seconda Guerra dell'Indipendenza. Di lui Trevelyan scrive: 'There was, besides, an excellent rifle in the skilled hands of the gigantic Peard – once the terror of the Oxford "town" – destined now to obtain, without seeking it, a European celebrity as "Garibaldi's Englishman."' Trevelyan, 90.

72 'The Latest Intelligence' in *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette*, 28th April 1864.

73 *The Illustrated London News*, 403. *Il Malta Times and United Services Gazette* del 28 aprile 1864 ha commentato così: 'The Earl of Clarendon in the Upper and Lord Palmerston in the Lower House, gave the most emphatic denial to this report, and stated that the sole cause of his departure was the state of his health which had been impaired by his exertions, and which required rest and quiet [...]. Any Government of this country [...] receiving such a communication from any foreign government would have very civilly [...] but at the same time very firmly resisted and repelled such a suggestion.'

Basile, medico curante al seguito del Generale, dichiarò apertamente che non c'era nulla di vero e che il suo paziente godeva di ottima salute. Lo stesso Garibaldi si dimostrò molto sorpreso perchè non si sentiva affatto deperito.[74] Ci furono altri tentativi, alquanto maldestri, da parte di Palmerston e Gladstone per convincerlo che l'aria di casa sua era più salubre di quella inglese; quando lui capì che la sua presenza non era più gradita decise di tagliar corto e andarsene.

Il suo comportamento durante la sua dimora londinese era stato pressocchè ineccepibile. Più volte aveva elogiato l'Inghilterra come centro della civiltà e della libertà, casa comune per tutti coloro che lottavano contro la tirannia; alla grande nazione inglese esprimeva la sua gratitudine per tutto quello che aveva fatto per l'Italia ed il suo popolo. Nelle cerimonie che presenziava aveva cercato di accontentare tutti i suoi ospiti; era stato al loro gioco e non perdeva mai l'occasione di dichiarare il suo affetto imperituro per l'Inghilterra per il sostegno che gli aveva sempre dato, affermando ripetutamente di sentirsi un 'Englishman,' ed orgoglioso di esserlo. L'unica volta che si era lasciato andare, denunciando i soprusi dell'Austria e della Prussia, fu sabato 16 aprile durante quell'incontro con i suoi connazionali al *Crystal Palace*, circondato da bandiere tricolori e manifesti inneggianti all'unità d'Italia. Ma in quell'occasione aveva pronunciato anche parole molto lusinghiere nei confronti dell'Inghilterra:

> Without Lord Palmerston, Naples would still be under the Bourbons. Without Admiral Mundy, I should not have been able to have passed the Straits of Messina. If England should ever be in danger, Italy ought to fight for her.[75]

Aveva avuto qualche incontro con i rivoluzionari europei, prontamente segnalato dalle moltissime spie che gli erano state messe alle calcagna, soprattutto dalle autorità italiane, ma non c'era stato nulla di sovversivo nelle sue azioni. Il suo sdegno era dunque più che lecito ma seppe star al

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74 *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette* scrive: '[...] there is some contradiction. Whilst Dr. Fergusson writes to Col. Chambers that Garibaldi is undertaking more than is conducive to his health and comfort, Dr. Basile, the General's physician in regular attendance upon him, in a letter to *The Times*, says, that his health is perfectly satisfactory, and that he is able to undergo the proposed journey to the provinces without danger.'

75 'Telegraphic Despatches' in *The Malta Times and United Services Gazette*, 21st April 1864.

gioco e seguitò a far la sua parte in tutta questa messa in scena. La visita in Cornovaglia fu un autentico trionfo. Il popolo volle esprimere il suo rammarico per quella partenza 'sospetta' affollando le stazioni ferroviarie e le strade lungo tutto il percorso per avere la possibilità di vederlo e per dimostrargli la sua sincera ammirazione.[76] Dopo l'incontro con Peard, egli si accomiatò dai suoi ospiti, pronunciando l'ennesimo discorso di gratitudine verso l'Inghilterra, e giovedì 28 aprile s'imbarcò sulla nave *Ondine*, che salpò da Fowey diretta a Caprera, dove giunse il 9 maggio.

Epilogo

Le ragioni della repentina partenza di Garibaldi dall'Inghilterra e l'annullamento delle visite programmate trovano concordi quegli storici che si sono interessati alle complesse vicende dell'eroe. Il Generale era un personaggio scomodo per gli entusiasmi che suscitava in tutti quelli che avevano a cuore la libertà e la lotta contro i tiranni. La sua visita inaspettata aveva messo tanti potenti in allarme e la soluzione sembrava quella di rispedirlo al più presto a Caprera. Si disse poi che oltre ai continui tripudi da parte del popolo quel viaggio segnò un fallimento politico per Garibaldi perchè in effetti egli non riuscì a guadagnare nulla. Montanelli sintezizza questa teoria parafrasando Guerzoni:

> Garibaldi imparò subito la parte di ospite soddisfatto, di commensale compiacente, di eroe cerimonioso, che gli veniva con tanto garbo imposta, e lasciò anche quella volta che la vecchia

76 *cfr.* Lettera di Lucy Trehane a Mary Dingle (27 april 1864), riprodotta con un commento redazionale di Mario Praz con il titolo di 'A propos of Garibaldi's visit to Cornwall' in *English Miscellany*, 9, 1958, 358-361. L'articolo fa riferimento ad una lettera spedita da Lucy Trehane di Exeter a sua cugina Mary Dingle il 27 aprile 1864 che dà un eccellente resoconto della stato di eccitamento collettivo e della ressa che ci fu nei villaggi della Cornovaglia in attesa dell'arrivo dell'eroe. Qui cito soltanto un passo della lettera. La totale mancanza di punteggiatura è indicativa dello stato di agitazione in cui si trovava la signora Trehane all'idea di poter vedere 'that glorious creature': '[...] the Superintendent of Police told us tonight that the crush at Bristol was frightful a mile and a half out of the town the line was so crowded that the engine was obliged slowly to pave its way between the people some of whom actually clambered up the carriage and Uncle N. heard one woman went into the carriage and hugged him so they could not get her away and he believed his wife would do the same and would leave him to go off with Garibaldi [...].'

> fortuna decidesse di lui. I suoi ospiti, d'altra parte, prima lo assordarono d'applausi, lo ingozzarono di pranzi, lo soffocarono di doni, lo tempestarono di brindisi, d'indirizzi, di poesie, lo menarono di qua, di là, di su, di giù, dove loro piacque, mostrandolo su tutti i palchi e su tutte le fiere, come il fenomeno vivente e la *great attraction* dell'ultima moda; poi, quando ne furono satolli e ristucchi, lo pregarono gentilmente d'andarsene ed egli se n'andò. Da quel viaggio, in verità, Garibaldi aveva raccolto onori quali e quanti nessun uomo aveva mai conseguito in quel paese, ma un frutto sostanziale, un aiuto anche indiretto, un beneficio anche remoto, non l'aveva raccolto. Aiutare la Polonia, sommuovere il Veneto, intraprendere una guerra di corsa contro l'Austria con danari, armi e bastimenti inglesi, erano stati i tre fini nascosti, vaghi ancora quanto ai mezzi, fermi quanto all'intento, che lo avevano spinto a quel faticoso pellegrinaggio, e sappiamo ormai che nessuno di quei tre fini gli riuscì: Garibaldi ottenne tutto dal popolo inglese, tutto tranne quello che gli stava a cuore.'[77]

Montanelli attribuisce questa interpretazione del soggiorno inglese al fatto che Guerzoni, che era molto vicino a Mazzini e che lo teneva informato di tutti gli spostamenti di Garibaldi, 'scriveva sotto il morso della delusione per il mancato accordo' tra i due.[78] Mack Smith fa notare che per capire 'come mai Guerzoni e gli altri diffusero all'estero l'oltraggioso sospetto che gli inglesi lo avessero spinto ad andarsene' dall'Inghilterra occorre tenere presente che per quasi tutta la visita coloro che lo avevano accompagnato dall'Italia erano stati ignorati, alloggiati altrove e che 'alla maggior parte dei festeggiamenti nessuno li aveva invitati.'[79] Per Montanelli il Generale non ottenne nulla perchè in realtà egli non chiese nulla.

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77 Montanelli e Nozza, 495f.
78 *Ibid.*, 497.
79 D. Mack Smith, *Garibaldi, una grande vita in breve* (Milano. Lerici, 1966), 131f.

The Rossetti siblings in the correspondence of their father

John Woodhouse

For the past twenty years a team of researchers in Naples and Oxford has been working to assemble and publish the *Carteggio* of Gabriele Rossetti,[1] the Abruzzi poet exiled from Naples in 1821 because of his efforts to obtain a written constitution for the kingdom of Naples. As a necessary preliminary to this paper, brief mention needs to be made of a few biographical details, and the identity of certain destinatees of his letters. It should also be added that the purpose of what follows is uncontroversially informative; it simply aims to uncover certain items of minor domestic interest buried among unpublished autograph manuscripts datable post-1840, as well as among the four substantial volumes of already published correspondence from the preceding sixteen years of Rossetti's life in London.

Condemned in his absence for his fiery verse and revolutionary activities, Rossetti left behind in his native Vasto a younger brother, Antonio, along with other relatives, and succeeded by a ruse (aided by the English Admiral Sir Graham Moore) in escaping to Malta.[2] There Rossetti made lasting friendships, including one with John Hookham Frere and his family, before leaving for England in 1824. In London, he gave Italian lessons and wrote critical essays, and in 1831 was elected to the newly created Chair of Italian at King's College, London.

The Rossetti family lived for most of Gabriele's life at numbers 38 and later 50, Charlotte Street. In 1826, Gabriele married Frances (Francesca) Lavinia Polidori, the second daughter of Gaetano Polidori, who had retired to the Buckinghamshire countryside at Holmer Green, a

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1 G. Rossetti, *Carteggi* a cura di, A. Caprio, P. R. Horne, S. Minichini, T. R. Toscano and J. R. Woodhouse, (Naples. Loffredo, 1984 and continuing) (so far four volumes have been published covering the period 1809-1840).

2 Rossetti, hiding from Ferdinand II's police, was dressed in an English officer's uniform and marched aboard the flagship of the English Mediterranean Fleet, commanded by Graham Moore, whose wife, Lady Dora, was most appreciative of Rossetti's poetic abilities.

village near Amersham.[3] It was to Holmer Green that Frances Polidori was to return annually, both for spring and summer holidays with her children, and simultaneously to look after her invalid mother; Frances was also able to convalesce there when she herself experienced long spells of ill health. In 1825, (though post-dated 1826) the publication of Rossetti's commentary on Dante's *Inferno*[4] elicited a letter of praise and encouragement from Charles Lyell of Kinnordy, a keen amateur student of Italian letters (particularly of Dante's works), and the father of the future great professor of geology. It was to and from these four locations, Vasto, Malta, Holmer Green and Kinnordy, that the majority of letters concerning his family were sent and received by Professor Gabriele. In the present paper sporadic reference will be made to earlier correspondence as well as to certain unpublished letters from the final decade of Rossetti's life which await the necessary funding before publication.

On 12 October 1842, concluding a letter to Charles Lyell, who by then had produced rich subsidies for several of Rossetti's writings, the latter showed pride in the members of his growing family, who would bring fame to the Rossetti name in future generations:

> Vi presento gli ossequi di mia moglie, e de' quattro miei figliuoli, che si sono rapidamente sviluppati di corpo, e vanno sempre più sviluppandosi d'anima. Studiosi ed ingegnosi faranno fede al mondo che vi fu un tale che si chiamava col mio nome.[5]

That rather touching acknowledgment of his own apparently mediocre reputation is typical of a grim period in his life when illness and blindness were taking their toll on his morale.

As Gabriele Rossetti entered the last decade of his life, the next generation of Rossettis were in their mid to late teens, the two elder children, Maria Francesca and Dante Gabriel being eighteen and sixteen

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3 Gaetano Polidori had been for a while the secretary of Vittorio Alfieri, and in London, albeit on a modest scale, had become a successful printer. His volumes are now regarded as important and valuable collectors' items.

4 G. Rossetti, *Comento analitico all'Inferno* (London. Murray, 1826).

5 In the case of unpublished letters, the date of the manuscript or the date-stamp on an envelope will be used as an identifier. For references to published correspondence, the volume and page number of the Loffredo edition will be given in the text after relevant quotations.

respectively. Soon the characteristics they had shown as infants began to be revealed as distinctive personality traits in Rossetti's letters. The character-sketches which Rossetti sent his friend Charles Lyell on 10 June 1846, capture their emergent personalities with just four epithets: 'carissima Maria [...] ingegnoso Gabriele [...] saggio Guglielmo [...] vivace Cristina.'

Rossetti's first-born child, Maria Francesca, was already in her twentieth year when her father wrote the above. She had begun life as something of an infant prodigy, and until the end retained a sharpness of intellect and an aptitude for study, as may be seen in her *Shadow of Dante* published in 1871, a clear and readable commentary on the *Divine Comedy*. Yet as her more brilliant siblings grew older, impressions of her become eclipsed by their particular qualities and prowess, notably those of Dante Gabriel and Christina. Nevertheless, as her father's constant amanuensis through his years of blindness, Maria Francesca's patience and assiduity deservedly earned her the epithet *carissima*. In his biography of the Rossetti family, R. D. Waller stresses three main features of her character: her unfailing cheerfulness, her strong sense of duty (in pursuance of which she worked as a governess for some years after 1844 in order to supplement the family budget), and her piety, which led her eventually to take the veil and, after the marriage of William Michael, to spend the last three years of her life (1873-6) in an Anglican convent.[6]

Already by the end of May 1832 Rossetti is writing to his wife to say that he intends to buy books for the five-year-old Maria, and a few days later, on 6 June he writes again concerning Polidori's gift of books to her, and his hopes that as she learned to read she might instruct her younger siblings:

> Maria ha avuto dal suo Nonno due bei libri di qualche costo, comprati espressamente per lei: una storia naturale con stampe di animali; ed una geografia storica d'Inghilterra con stampe di edifici. L'una e l'altra sono stampate in quest'anno e potranno esserle molto utili. Ella ne andrà leggendo qualche tratto ai suoi fratellini, e instruendo se stessa instruirà altrui (III, 61).

And less than one year later, Maria is able to write a letter to her mother to accompany her father's own missive of 13 January 1834:

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6 R. D. Waller, *The Rossetti Family* (Manchester. M.U.P., 1932).

My dear Mamma,

Gabriel, William and Christina desire three kind loves and their best kiss. Is poor Grandmamma better? I will tell you the things as they came. First as we were in the Café and had eaten a few cakes Gabriel ran to the door and soon spied to our very great joy the kings levy of Soldiers.

Uncle Henry says the turkey came on Saturday it was so far gone that it was quite out of the question to send it. He had it cooked the same day. Granny came yesterday, and gave us each a shilling.

I remain, Your affectionate, Maria F. Rossetti (III, 321).

During Francesca Polidori's frequent absences in Buckinghamshire, the two parents more and more shared the growing children between them and references in Rossetti's letters show his observation of their development. One such for instance, sent on 16 January 1836 notes, 'Non puoi credere quanto Maria e Guglielmo son buoni, quieti, amorevoli' (III, 565). Indeed, by this date Maria had begun to interest herself in keeping a record of her father's appointments:

> Maria è quella che ha preso a registrare le lezioni mie quotidianamente, e le pare essersi elevata a maggiore importanza e dignità. Non so esprimerti quanto è attenta e pronta. La mattina prima ch'io esca m'interroga circa le lezioni da darsi, e tosto prende il suo bel libro e le scrive. Non ha mica pazienza di aspettare fino alla sera, ma vi dirige il pensiero fino dalla mattina. Che cara e interessante donzelletta è questa nostra Maria! (III, 566)

Visitors to the house during this period admired Maria for the Italianate quality of her looks. On one occasion, noted by Gabriele in a letter of 20 January 1836, Conte Carlo Pepoli, he of Leopardian fame, saw the young girl in the café frequented by her father and, not knowing the relationship, talked with Gabriele about the perfection of her beauty. Gabriele relates the experience to the absent Francesca:

> Quando uscimmo dal caffè, ella mi disse "Papà, io non credo affatto quel che ha detto quel signore; Cristina è molto più bella di me, e *tutti dicono così.*" [...] Mi sono compiaciuto nel vedere che quelle voci di ammirazione ed elogio, espresse dal Pepoli, non eccitarono in lei la minima ombra di vanità, e che anzi le disapprovava. (III, 574)

Gabriele always kept in touch, albeit sporadically, with his family back in the Abruzzi. In one letter to his brother Antonio in Vasto on 9 August 1838 (IV, 185), he renounces all rights over any inheritance he may have back in his home town, including the family olive grove,

simultaneously noting his own domestic responsibilities in London, and summing up the promising characteristics of his children:

> Una moglie sommamente istruita, e virtuosa, nella quale avete un'efficacissima avvocata, quattro figluoli (Maria Francesca, Gabriele, Guglielmo e Cristina) mi fan sentire la necessità di assidua fatica; e spero prima di morire, aver dato loro una buona educazione. La primogenita che ha 11 anni e mezzo è pienissima d'ingegno, e per la sua età oltremodo istruita: i due fanciulli intermedi vanno al collegio, e già il primo ha ottenuto il premio nel latino in quest'anno (l'uno ha 10 e l'altro 9) e la quarta fanciulla promette molto; essa ha sette anni e 8 mesi.

And in a letter written to Gabriele on 21 August 1839 by a family friend, Annie Jervis, returning Maria Francesca to her parents, we find a testimony to her character: 'I send back Maria on the appointed day, and am indeed very sorry to lose her, for she is one of the sweetest and most intelligent creatures "for child I cannot call her" I ever met with'(IV, 270); and on a subsequent visit to Richmond, the proud father continues the eulogy in a letter to Francesca.[7] Just three days later, Rossetti on 5 September 1839, writes with further pride at the news, received from his father-in-law, Polidori, that Maria had read Hesiod's *Theogony* and a play of Euripides, translated into Italian, and that she was about to read the *Expedition of the Argonauts*. He ignores the suggestion that too much intellectual activity may impinge upon Maria's health, 'quando all'applicazione volontaria è congiunto molto diletto, essa è ben lungi dal cagionar detrimento alla sanità; e diventa pascolo dell'anima che si converte in beneficio del corpo' (IV, 280). And when, that same September, the Polidori family decide to move from Holmer Green to Park Village, to a pleasant but still anonymous cottage, Gabriele writes to his wife asking her to call upon Maria's classical expertise to find a suitable name: 'Di' a Maria che consulti il suo repertorio Greco per dargliene uno' (IV, 289). To his patron, Charles Lyell, he is able to confirm on 16 December that

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7 Gabriele, writing on 2 September 1839 to his wife at her father's house in Holmer Green, speaks of this later visit to Richmond, and of Mrs. Jervis's remarks: 'Ella mi ha parlato della nostra cara Maria (cui mando la paterna benedezione) a lungo a lungo, e con molta ammirazione. Se fosse più estesa questa pagina ti direi quel che mi ha detto, ma ho appena spazio di mandare i miei sinceri rispetti ai tuoi genitori' (IV, 278).

Maria is studying Greek by herself, 'quella di cui particolarmente mi compiaccio è la mia primogenita, Maria Francesca, la quale è stata dotata dalla natura di un ingegno non comune.' Such accomplishments for a girl of twelve years lacking any formal education speak for themselves as an indication of her intelligence and precocity.

Rossetti suffered from bouts of blindness for long periods of his life, possibly due to some diabetic condition (which eventually took the sight of one eye). The next letter available is sent a year later by Rossetti, dated 3 February 1845, and dictated to Maria, by now her father's faithful amanuensis:

> Mi valgo della mano di mia figlia nel rispondere, perché son già quasi totalmente cieco. Non posso più né leggere né scrivere, e solo giungo a distinguere gli oggetti in grande e le strade, per le quali raramente vado, ma tutto a traverso una nebbia fastidiosa. Il mio destino è quasi sigillato: E' favola la vita, / e la favola mia è quasi finita. Sono oramai sei mesi che l'unico occhio che mi rimane ha cominciato ad offuscarsi a grado a grado, e temo che, se continua così sarà del tutto estinto.

Still blind and still dictating to Maria, Gabriele notes in a letter of 9 April 1846, 'La mia cara figluola Maria è ora con me, in aspettativa di qualche buona situazione.'

By contrast with the more subdued references to his first-born, Rossetti's artist son is ensured a relatively prominent place in the correspondence thanks in no small part to the fact that Charles Lyell (who was his godfather) gave an impetus to his artistic talents and career by commissioning him in 1848 to paint the portrait of his old friend, Professor Gabriele, which he wanted to display in the library at Kinnordy. The progress of the work is documented in the *Carteggio* between 27 July and 21 November 1848.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was born a year after Maria Francesca on 12 May 1828. His father, despite a natural pride in his new son, strangely delayed the announcement of the birth for some sixteen days before informing his patron Charles Lyell (though he had written at least once before, on 22 May 1828, without mentioning the new arrival). But in Charles Lyell's next letter to Gabriele, dated 23 May, the wealthy Scot remarks that he hopes to be in London at the opening of June. It may be that Gabriele had not immediately informed Lyell of the happy event because he wanted time to consider his next, and potentially brilliant ploy: asking Lyell to be the son's godfather. Indeed, the particular letter

in which he makes the suggestion, dated 28 May 1828, is one of the richest and longest that he wrote that year. The section about his new son is introduced with a nonchalance akin to Castiglionesque *disinvoltura,* two short paragraphs from the end of the missive:

> A rendere memorabile a me stesso l'epoca dolorosa in cui lo [Dante Alighieri] illustro nell'esilio, rinnoverò il suo nome nella mia famiglia. Son pochi giorni che mia moglie ha dato alla luce un piccolo Rossetti. Io lo chiamerò Dante; e se potessi lusingarmi che un certo valentuomo, ch'io molto rispetto, volesse essere il *santolo per procura* del mio piccolo protestante, lo chiamerei nel sacro fonte *Dante Charles Rossetti*. Io non lo battezzerò se prima non ricevo risposta da quel Valentuomo ch'io tanto venero. Se egli acconsentisce, due Filodanti saranno al nuovo Dante, uno padre per natura e l'altro padre di Dio (II, 252).

However, the gifted Dante Gabriel had more than one artistic talent, and it was his literary proclivities that first manifested themselves. Indeed in another letter, dated 11 February 1836, Rossetti informs Lyell how the young boy devours great literature, notably Shakespeare:

> Il vostro Gabriele-Carlo-Dante non fa altro che leggere: questa è la sua prima passione, la seconda è quella del disegno. Sa molti squarci di Shakespeare a memoria e li declama con energia. Si divora un volume con più appetito, e forse rapidità ch'io faccia (III, 596).

The character differences between the children are well summed up in a sentence of their father, who, shortly afterwards that same February 1836, sympathises with his wife, recovering still at Holmer Green in the company of the tempestuous couple Dante Gabriel and Cristina (while he takes charge of the serene Maria and William):

> Se volessi cambiare due calme per due tempeste ti lascerei Maria e Guglielmo, e riporterei indietro con me Gabriele e Cristina. Se il baratto non ti dispiacesse, io lo farei volentieri, nella speranza che questi due si convengano più al tuo presente stato (III, 602).

Soon afterwards, on 4 March 1836, he is delighted to receive a letter from Dante Gabriel: 'Ringrazia Gabriele per la bella lettera che mi ha scritta, e digli che gli darò uno scellino per comperarsene stampe' (III, 607). By July 4 of that year 1836, Rossetti wrote to Charles Lyell that his godson, 'il nostro Dantuccio' was beginning to study Latin with great attention and pleasure (III, 631). Five days later, Lyell expressed his astonishment that young Dante Gabriel should be learning Latin with pleasure, since in his view it was taught so abominably in England that

'old Sam Johnson used to say "We always hate the man who taught us Latin." I perfectly agreed with him' (III, 632).

By 13 August 1837, Gabriele declares that he is preparing the entrance of the two boys to King's College School (where as a member of King's College staff Gabriele was allowed to send his eldest son free, whilst paying a nominal sum for Michael) (IV, 97). Just one year later, 9 August 1838, he writes to his brother Antonio in Vasto, summing up his two sons' academic progress, 'i due fanciulli intermedi vanno al collegio, e già il primo ha ottenuto il premio nel latino in quest'anno (l'uno ha 10 e l'altro 9)' (IV, 186).

Dante Gabriele's earliest poems were written when he was a boy of six. He had already been indulged by his grandfather, Gaetano Polidori, who used the printing-press at Holmer Green to print the text of the budding poet's chivalric romance entitled *Sir Hugh the Heron*, completed in 1842. His precocious talent at the age of fifteen is celebrated in light-hearted fashion in letters of 1843 and 1844, where Charles Lyell refers to him as 'the poet Gabriele Dante' (28 May 1843, 20 January 1844). But the young Dante Gabriel's maturer phase began with his personal discovery of Dante's poetic works in about 1845, the year in which the third and last edition of Lyell's Dante versions, *The Lyrical Poems of Dante*, was published. Very soon after this, if his brother William Michael's memory is to be trusted, Dante Gabriel had embarked on his translation of the *Vita Nuova* and Dante's other lyrics, which, many years later, would form an integral part of his first published volume, *The Early Italian Poets* of 1861. This translation, together with three of his illustrations to the *Vita Nuova*, was finished by the autumn of 1848, as his father reported to Lyell on 27 October of that year, anticipating the details supplied by the author himself in a letter to his godfather dated 14 November. The young poet, now in his twenty-first year, did not as yet have any definite plan to publish his work; publication became a concrete project only in 1850, when he began translating numerous early lyrics by Italian authors other than Dante. When the published volume, complete with its eight illustrations, finally appeared, it was a splendid testimony to the author's craftsmanship, both verbal and pictorial. It has been thought by some to be finer than anything else the poet produced.

As Gabriele entered on the final decade of his life, his artist son has more and more space in the correspondence devoted to his talents,

not least thanks to that commission from his godfather to paint the portrait of his old friend. The progress of the work is documented in the *Carteggi* particularly between July 27 and November 21, 1848. Again, on 28 May 1843, Charles Lyell refers playfully to Dante Gabriel as 'the poet G.C.D.R.' During the next grim years of blindness and ill-health for Rossetti senior, the flow of letters becomes understandably slower and more sporadic. In one of Charles Lyell's rare references to Dante Gabriel, he sends kind wishes on 20 January 1844 to Gabriele 'and Mrs Rossetti, the poet Gabriele Dante, Maria Francesca etc., etc.' and his name, as Lyell's *figlioccio*, begins to crop up occasionally in subsequent letters from Rossetti. And finally on 9 April 1846, in a rare reference to Dante Gabriel's new artistic talents, Rossetti refers to his son's art studies, 'Il mio Gabriele si va avanzando sempre più nell'arte, ma non trova ancora come utilmente occuparsi.' By 10 June 1846, he sends respects to Lyell in the name of his 'ingegnoso Gabriele.' As the inception of the future Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood draws close, on 25 July 1848, Rossetti makes a longer allusion to his son's artistic powers:

> Non potete immaginare qual progresso abbia fatto ultimamente nella pittura il vostro figlioccio Gabriele Carlo Dante. Senza il minimo dubbio ch'egli sarà un grande artista: ei disegna con facilità e correzione, e comincia a colorire con gusto e leggiadria.

It was the very next letter sent by Charles Lyell, and dated 27 July 1848, which commissioned the young Dante Gabriel to paint a portrait of his father in oils:

> Let me beg of you to use your influence with your son, Mr G. C. D. Rossetti, to be the artist who is to gratify my wish [for a portrait]; as I feel sure that no other would make it equally a labour of love, and be so likely to put forth a perfect resemblance of you. [...] If your son shall be pleased to meet my wishes, I shall beg of you to present him with the enclosed order for £10. If he declines, I will tell you how to dispose of it otherwise.

On 27 October 1848, Gabriele writes to Charles Lyell, 'Vi annunzio con gioia che il nostro Gabriele Carlo Dante ha già finito il mio ritratto.' In the same letter, he mentions his son's work on Dante's *Vita Nuova,* which though completed in manuscript would have to wait another thirteen years before publication:

> Il vostro figlioccio mi dice in questo momento ch'egli oggi appunto ha terminato la sua versione in inglese della *Vita Nuova*, di cui ha tradotto in *rima* tutte le poesie. Egli ha preso a farvi anche delle

> illustrazioni in disegni pittorici, che mi paiono bellissimi: ne ha già compiti tre.[8]

The news of the portrait provoked another generous offering from Lyell on 30 October 1848, a further money-order for £15, 'the largest sum I have read of earned by an English artist for a first portrait in oil.' Gabriele himself is quick to recognise the benefit of Lyell's generosity, not only in the immediate material advantage ('magnifico dono') which £25 could bring to an impoverished student of painting, but also in the powerful encouragement it brought ('varrà di potente stimolo') to persuade Dante Gabriel to continue the difficult path of art. Old Gabriele takes the early opportunity of thanking Lyell for his munificence on 3 November 1848, eleven days before his son puts pen to paper. But Gabriele's letter also contains the reason for such a delay on his son's part:

> Egli da qualche tempo sta lavorando un quadro della Vergine, e questa fatica in cui ha posto molto affetto, lo ha spesso richiamato a sé: questo è il motivo che il mio ritratto non è stato compito prima.

Here is the opening announcement of Dante Gabriele's first painting for the Pre-Raphaelite Brethren, 'The Girlhood of Mary Virgin,' exhibited at the free exhibition of the Royal Academy in April 1849 (and now in the Tate Gallery in London). Again on 31 December 1848, Gabriele can still write to Lyell, 'Il vostro figlioccio è ora intento a lavorare un quadro che figura la Gioventù e l'Educazione della Vergine.' Dante Gabriel's own letter of 14 November 1848, accompanying his father's portrait has been published several times, though its importance in the history of the movement may justify its inclusion in a note here.[9] What is generally not so well known is the unpublished letter of his mother Francesca (or Frances as here) Rossetti, who wrote to Charles Lyell on 25 June 1849 concerning the new painting:

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8 For a more detailed study of Dante Gabriel's illustrated translation of the Dante's *New Life* see J. R. Woodhouse, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Translation and Illustration of the *Vita Nuova*' in *Britain and Italy from Romanticism to Modernism* M. McLaughlin (ed.) (Oxford. Legenda, 2000), 67-86.

9 It was published for the first time by J. Purves in 'Dante Rossetti and his Godfather, Charles Lyell of Kinnordy' *University of Edinburgh Journal* IV, 2, (1931), 116-8; *cfr. Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* O. Doughty and J. R. Wahl (eds.) (London. Oxford University Press, 1965-7), I, 46-49.

> Gabriel's picture has been at the Free Exhibition during more than two months. It has been very favourably commented on in several papers [...]. So great a majority of votes in its praise is very encouraging to a young artist as regards his first performance, and will serve as an excitement to strenuous effort in his future works.[10]

By August 22, Gabriele can write to his patron that the picture of the Virgin had been sold to the Marchioness of Bath, for £80. She had originally offered sixty guineas, but the headstrong young artist had replied that the price in the catalogue was eighty guineas and that was the price he required! Charles Lyell was expectedly shocked by his godson's obstinacy:

> I am exceedingly anxious to hear that Mr Gabriel Rossetti did not like the munificent offer of Lady Bath (of 60 guineas) by neglecting to accept at once, instead of reminding her by letter that the price he had put upon it was 80 guineas. I fear she may have thought this presumption, and that her patronage may have been lost by it.

His anxiety, expressed in a letter of 6 September 1849, was of no avail. The Marchioness paid up, as Rossetti diplomatically informs Lyell on 8 September. On 25 September, Lyell praises the noble generosity of the Marchioness in sending Dante Gabriel the full sum, and agrees with his old friend: 'This first success is most encouraging to the artist and gives me great confidence in his future prosperous career.' That was Lyell's final missive. He was to die less than two months later.

Compared to his artist brother, William Michael was a relatively pedestrian character, and many of the references to him are of a domestic kind. Born on 25 September 1829, his first mention in the *Carteggi* is in an undated letter sent by Gabriele to Susan Frere, wishing her a happy new year (and so datable towards the end of December 1829), briefly noting that the family is in good health and that 'il mio tenero Guglielmo, che ha soli tre mesi, è vispo e giocondo come un Ercoletto' (II, 444). Typically, the next mention of the young child is in a letter to his wife Francesca, dated 4 May 1831, wondering why she has not given him news of William Michael (or Christina): 'Nell'altra tua non mi hai detto nulla né di Guglielmo né di Cristina: ripara la tua mancanza' (II, 611). A

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10 For other comments on the importance of 'The Girlhood of Mary Virgin', see also R. Watkinson, *Pre-Raphaelite Art and Design* (London. Studio Vista, 1970), 30-5 and 49-56, and J. R. Woodhouse, 'D. G. Rossetti, D'Annunzio e il Preraffaellismo' in *I Rossetti tra Italia e Inghilterra* G. Oliva (ed.) (Roma. Bulzoni, 1983), 353-72.

year later, on 7 May 1832, he is still enquiring about the two, and looks forward to seeing his second son once more: 'Mi attendo di rivedere Guglielmo con quelle sue rose sul volto, come l'anno passato, e grasso come un porchetto a cui luce il pelo (III, 28). But by 21 May, Francesca has to tell him that William Michael is ill with a fever (III, 45), and during the next few weeks all the children have sore throats or coughs (III, 51). By 4 June 1832, things seem to have improved and Gabriele writes with news of a book for the young William Michael, just two and a half years old: 'Assicura anche Guglielmo che, se è buon ragazzo, vi sarà un libretto per lui' (III, 61).

Most of the references to William Michael are inconsequential and most of the early mentions concern his state of health; another, from Gabriele to Charles Lyell, notes that the boy had been suffering from fevers, and declares that he is about to take him to Dr. Elliotson for a consultation (III, 529). John Elliotson was one of the leading medical professors of the time, with a prestigious chair at University College; Rossetti did not stint his family when it came to medical care. Responding on 15 August 1835, to an enquiry from Lyell about the boy, Gabriele mentions that he has spent a guinea for a medical prescription (III, 534). William Michael's recovery from his illness continues chronically until 14 December 1835, when, rather tastelessly Gabriele adduces the boy's minor illness, along with an accident to himself, in order to set these trivia against the death of Charles Lyell's daughter (III, 550).[11]

By 16 January 1836, Francesca is again away from London, and William Michael (along with Maria) is staying with Gabriele in London. By contrast with the other two children Gabriele tells Francesca: 'Non puoi credere quanto Maria e Guglielmo son buoni, quieti, amorevoli' (III, 565), and later in the same letter, 'Vorrei che Gabriele e Cristina si comportassero costà come Maria e Guglielmo.' Unlike his siblings, William Michael seems an anonymous, unremarkable boy, and even Count Pepoli,[12] in his eulogy of Maria's beauty (already surprising to Gabriele) fails to notice her brother: 'Il povero Guglielmo non seppe attirarsi neppure

11 *cfr.* Lyell's dignified statement of 7 December 1835: 'This has been a house of sorrow. My amiable, beautiful, accomplished daughter, Elizabeth, expired on the 25 October, having just passed her 21st birthday [...] *ecc.*' (III, 547).

12 See above and the reference to Maria Francesca's unassuming modesty (III, 547).

uno sguardo del rapito ammirator di Maria; eppure quel ragazzetto ha forme regolari, mite sembiante e dolcissime maniere' (III, 574). But Rossetti consoles himself with the fact that William Michael has begun to read, under the tuition of Maria, even though he seems a reluctant pupil, 'si vede chiaro che gli costa una gran pena' and whereas Dante Gabriel expressed his initial dislike of learning 'con risoluto dispetto,' his brother 'l'esprime talvolta con lo sbadiglio, talvolta con voce di stanchezza, e talvolta anche col pianto.' (III, 575).

Just a week later, on 27 January 1836, Gabriele informs Francesca of William's new bookish attitudes, most willing to learn from his aunt Margherita:

> Quel *mite* Guglielmo segue ad essere *pasta di mèle*, e non puoi credere quanto è voglioso d'imparare a leggere. Si pone col suo libretto in un cantone, e sempre con gli occhi al libro cerca d'indovinare le sillabe e le parole. Quando legge con Margherita non piange più, anzi sembra *vogliosissimo* non che docile ed attento (III, 585-6).

The eulogy continues in a letter of 9 February 1836, 'Guglielmo segue ad esser il modello de' buoni ragazzi; passa molte ore col libro in mano, e smania per imparare a leggere' (III, 592). And on 11 October 1836, Rossetti writes to his wife to say that he has bought his son a birthday present: 'un Shakespeare in sei volumi, antica edizione con stampe, e piuttosto ben legata.' The little boy had just then celebrated his seventh birthday.

Illness continues to figure in references to William Michael. The awful scarlet fever attacks him along with Dante Gabriel in October 1838, as we gather from a letter to Charles Lyell of 25 October, in which it becomes clear that the illness had lasted fifteen days, though by then the two boys were recovering somewhat (IV, 204). Even so, on 2 November 1838, while Dante Gabriel was better, 'Guglielmo è assai più languido, ma con l'aiuto di alcuni rimedi che sta prendendo spero che riacquisterà le sue forze' (IV, 211). By the age of nine, William Michael, along with his elder brother, had been enrolled at King's College School and Rossetti reports as much to John Hookham Frere on 1 May 1839 (IV, 237). For his next birthday, grandmother Polidori sends the boy a sovereign and William Michael acknowledges the gift with thanks via his father in a letter to Francesca on 5 September 1839 (IV, 281).

Unlike the feckless Dante Gabriel, William Michael was, then, from earliest childhood, the 'good boy' of the family; hence his father's

description 'saggio' (10 June 1846). Waller catalogues his qualities as steady reliability, industriousness, undisturbable calm, and good sense. In adulthood, he was a pillar of strength on whom his parents and sisters could depend when the financial circumstances of the family were at a low ebb; after his father's death, it predictably fell to him to take in his mother and his two sisters, and to care for them. The arrangement continued after his marriage in 1874, despite the fact that his relatives did not get on well with his wife. He also played a characteristically supportive role in relation to Dante Gabriel. No artist himself, he was happy to be co-opted into the Brotherhood of the Pre-Raphaelites, performing the task of secretary and keeping a regular diary of the work and proceedings of the Brotherhood from its formation up to 8 April 1850. In that role, and subsequently as an art critic, he did an excellent public relations job for the Pre-Raphaelites. Later art specialists and historians of the period are greatly in his debt for the thoroughness and scholarly care with which he wrote about his family (including himself) and compiled his bibliography of Dante Gabriel's works.

Apart from Gabriele Rossetti's comment about the character of the young man in his seventeenth year, there are only three further allusions to him in the Rossetti-Lyell correspondence, the first of which refers to the post which he had recently obtained at the Excise Office through the good offices of the financier Sir Isaac Goldsmid, who had years earlier, supported Gabriele Rossetti's successful application for the Professorship of Italian at King's College, London, in 1831 (cfr. *Carteggi*, II, XX). Evidently, his son's employers had been quick to recognise his sterling qualities: 'pare che i suoi superiori lo tengano in pregio: docile e buonissimo giovinetto, di viva mente e di buon cuore.' (9 April 1846). Two and a half years later, in a letter to Lyell dated 27 October 1848, Rossetti was proud to announce that William Michael and his sister, Christina, had both had poems published in recent issues of the *Athenaeum*. William Michael's poem, entitled *In the Hill-Shadow*, is a sombre piece of work. It describes how the poet sits by a dead child's graveside and meditates on the fate of the occupant. It may seem typical of William Michael that, although by his own admission he had no natural poetic talent, he should seek to emulate his older brother, who did. Thus it happened, ironically, that the prosaic brother appeared in print as a would-be poet some twelve years before Dante Gabriel published anything beyond the juvenilia of the private *Sir Hugh the Heron*. Charles Lyell,

who thought that Christina's choice of subjects for her poems was unsuitable for a young girl, remained silent about her brother's contribution to the same periodical.

Rossetti returned to the subject of William Michael's employment in a letter he addressed to Lyell in the following year (8 September 1849), seemingly the last he wrote to his patron, who was to die that December: 'Dall'età di 15 anni il poverino guadagna il suo pane, e nell'impiego che ha va migliorando ogni anno la sua condizione ed il suo appannaggio.' How different from the situation of Dante Gabriel, who at the later age of eighteen, had still not settled down into gainful employment! As Rossetti recognised, William Michael had every reason to feel resentful at being forced into the civil service, when his ambition and inclination was to be a doctor: 'Se non mi avesse colpito la tremenda infermità che mi ha così prostrato, avrei dato più completa educazione alla mia famiglia, ed avrei fatto del mio figlio secondo un professor di medicina, per cui egli, fornito di grand'ingegno solido, aveva una decisa inclinazione.' It is an indication of his son's capacity to put up with life's frustrations, not to mention a testimony to his sheer doggedness, that he never changed his occupation, but spent his whole working life at the Excise Office, in which he eventually reached a senior position.

Christina Georgina Rossetti was born on 5 December 1830 and early references, almost exclusively in Gabriele's letters to his wife, are concerned wholly with her health and upbringing, beginning with a letter of 7 May 1832, in which he hopes that the fresh air of Holmer Green will improve his daughter's already blooming health (III, 28). During that same month, he is concerned that she be weaned, in order to allow Francesca to improve her own strength (III, 44 and 47). Her tantrums and the pain of her teething causes Gabriele to regret, on 16 May 1833, that his wife has so much to put up with: 'Mi rincresce che quell'angelica demonietta di Cristina sia così torbida e piagnona; ma forse con lo star meglio, come spero, diverrà meno inquieta' (III, 225). On 20 January 1836, Gabriele buys Christina a chest of drawers ('ho pagato 10 scellini'), and hopes that the present will make her behave herself (III, 573); in the same letter he trusts that the little girl will benefit from the peace of Holmer Green in order to learn to read. Yet, only a month or so later, on 4 March 1836, after a visit to his exile family, Rossetti noted gratifyingly that 'né Cristina si rimarrà senza premio della tenera affezione che mi mostrò in tutto il tempo che restai in Holmer Green' (III, 607). For a

while, she returned with her father to London and, on 30 August 1836, Gabriele writes with some pleasure to his wife: 'Non puoi immaginarti come Cristina è buona' (III, 649), and as the year wears on she gratifies him further by her efforts to learn to read:

> Cristina ha cominciato a leggere benino, e al tuo ritorno ne rimarrai compiaciuta. Le ho promesso un *libro rosso,* per premio del suo studio e del suo progresso; e debbe essere *rosso* perché così lo desidera. Che ragazza curiosa! (III, 687).

Christina is determined to learn to read properly before her mother's return to Charlotte Street (III, 690).

During the next two years, Rossetti makes only two references to Christina, largely concerned with a barking cough and with her recovery, but by August 1838, he is able to inform his brother Antonio in Vasto, that 'la quarta fanciulla promette bene: essa ha sette anni e 8 mesi' (IV, 186). She goes for walks with her father, notably towards the new house that they have found for the Polidori parents in Regents Park (fifteen minutes from Charlotte Street) (IV, 276), and for excursions to Richmond. Perhaps significant, is that Francesca sees it appropriate to write a verse epistle to Christina (enclosed with her usual letter from Holmer Green to Gabriele on 16 September 1839), causing Gabriele to respond: 'Bravissima la epistola poetica che hai diretta a Cristina! L'amor materno non è l'ultima musa. La ragazza n'è sí contenta e m'ha ripetuto varie volte ch'è *molto bella*, e che vuol conservarla con molta gelosia' (IV, 290).

The adolescent Christina, poetess of the Rossetti family, was endowed with a talent no less precocious than Dante Gabriel's. The earliest poems contained in her volume of *Verses*, which grandfather Polidori printed for her in 1847, had been written when she was twelve. Some of the later ones, composed in her seventeenth year, anticipated the poems of her maturity. Her grandfather was understandably enthusiastic about their quality. Christina's poetic gifts are first mentioned in the Rossetti-Lyell correspondence in 1846, when her father told Lyell that his fifteen-year-old daughter 'mostra rare disposizioni per la poesia' (9 April 1846). Two years later, the year after her *Verses* had been printed, Rossetti had the satisfaction of informing his friend that she had just published two poems in the *Athenaeum*. Moreover, she had received a personal letter of congratulations from the editor, who sought her

permission to publish her full name, in response to the many enquiries received from admiring readers (27 October 1848). The first of the two poems, consisting of seven six-line rhymed stanzas, is entitled *Death's Chill Between*, and concerns the poet's dead lover, whose ghostly footsteps sound outside her door, although, on investigation, she finds there is nobody there. The other poem, slightly longer, but in a similar metre, was *Heart's Chill Between*, and reflects on a lover's faithlessness. It was a remarkable achievement on the part of the authoress to have got her verses published more than ten years before Dante Gabriel's mature verse and translations came out in print, and her readers could hardly have guessed that they were the work of such a young poet. Lyell, however, thoroughly disapproved of such Romantic mawkishness, or what he termed 'German-like, dreamy horrors' (30 October 1848). He recommended that Christina should learn better taste by reading the *canzonetta* 'Go, lovely Rose' by the seventeenth-century poet Edmund Waller.

It was around this time that there occurred the first great personal event in the otherwise quiet life of the poetess: her short-lived attachment and engagement to the poet, James Collinson, whom she met through the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, of which he was a member. Christina had accepted his proposal in 1848, but broke off the engagement in May-June 1850. There is no mention of these developments in the correspondence for 1848-9, and it must be said that there were more momentous events to occupy the attention of Rossetti and his friends during the last two years of Lyell's life, not least the Italian revolution of 1848 and Rossetti's heightened expectations of being able to return to Naples.

By the time of Charles Lyell's death in 1849 and the end of the Rossetti-Lyell correspondence, even the youngest of the Rossetti children, the nineteen-year-old Christina, was approaching maturity. Rossetti had travelled a long way since the days when, as a newcomer to London, virtually unknown in his host country, and full of misgivings about rebuilding his life, he had been forced into the drudgery of teaching Italian irregular verbs to the offspring of prosperous upper- and middle-class London families. Disappointed by the rejection of his candidature for the Chair of Italian at the 'new' London University, which had gone,

instead to Antonio Panizzi, he had gone on to win for himself a respected place in the British establishment by obtaining a Chair at King's College. He could not possibly have predicted that the two most talented of his children would, by their contributions to English art and letters, become infinitely more famous in this country than their father.

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Exiles at Home: The Case of the Rossettis

Valeria Tinkler-Villani

The Rossettis have been called 'the most remarkable household in London.'[1] This needs little explanation: of the four children, two – Dante Gabriel and Christina – are among the most famous and best poets of the second half of the nineteenth century, Gabriel being also a painter. The younger brother, William Michael, would make an ideal subject for a biographer and, indeed, a historian because of the range of his acquaintances, the diversity of his writings, and his important role in editing the work of authors as varied as William Blake and Walt Whitman. Though her final years were spent in retirement, even the life and work of the eldest sibling, Maria Francesca, offers considerable information on the historical and social history of the period, and her *The Shadow of Dante* (1871) is as good an introduction to Dante's *Commedia* as any at that time. Where does all this talent come from? And why did it run the course it did? In this article I intend to set out a number of available facts, together with some inferences to be drawn from them, concerning the case of the Rossettis, a family positioned between English and Italian culture.

The Rossetti children were all born in London, where they lived all their lives. Their talent must originate partly in the family, a family which started with the marriage between Gabriele Rossetti (a political exile) and his half-Italian and half-English wife, Frances Polidori. We have all read William Michael's description of the family gathered together in the evening with a group of Italian exiles who sang patriotic songs and declaimed poetry.[2] We know, therefore, that the children were not relegated to the nursery, but listened or played about – according to their age and disposition. It was, therefore, an informal, cosy and certainly Italian family. This is how Gabriele, the father, remembered it in later years, although he realizes that others might disagree with his sentimental assessment. In his autobiography in verse, *La Vita Mia - Il Testamento*, he says:

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1 Quoted in F. Thomas, *Christina Rossetti: A Biography* (London, 1994), 13.

2 William Michael Rossetti, Introduction to *The Pre-Raphaelite Diaries and Letters* William Michael Rossetti (ed.) 3 vols. (Farnborough, 1900 repr. 1971), I, 54f.

Gli altri forse diran che ad ogni uccello
(Proverbio antico) il nido suo par bello[3]

[Others might perhaps say that to every bird
(As in the old adage) its own nest seems beautiful]

This is one of the occasional good moments in this poetry, where the voice goes beyond the tone of self-justification and self-dramatising and becomes truly personal. The lines also show Rossetti's liking for proverbs and for the popular wisdom and sense of tradition they transmit.

The tradition Rossetti brought with him from Italy was of a very particular nature. Rossetti starts as an *improvvisatore*, a composer and singer of stirring patriotic songs, and he also produced landscape paintings, according to the taste of the times. A dilettante, a man of the arts in a vague and general way, he was steeped in the real life of his time: the culture and also the politics of his day. He belonged to the *Carboneria*, one of a number of political secret societies. The *Carboneria* was, originally, a French society structured along the lines of the Freemasons, *carbonari* meaning sellers of coal. Members of this society used coded language and secret messages. In Italy, the *Carboneria* drew its members from all classes of society, and for a short period – the period just prior to Rossetti's flight – their secrecy was due to their political aims and the terrorist means employed to achieve these aims and was, therefore, necessary for survival. Rossetti's notorious interpretation of Dante's *Commedia*, in which he claimed to have discovered – inscribed in coded language – a Templar or Rosicrucian system involving a global brotherhood is firmly steeped in the political and historical reality of early nineteenth-century Italy, however fanciful it might seem to us now. It is possible that Rossetti initially joined the *Carbonari* mainly as an intellectual and social activity and that he was hugely surprised at finding himself pursued by the authorities for one of his songs. Be that as it may, suddenly any playing at being a dilettante became serious, any dabbling in secret societies and hidden codes, a matter of life and death, in a very literal sense. Rossetti was pursued, and fled for his life. Heroic romance turned into bitter reality.

In England, he became particularly friendly with Gaetano Polidori, an Italian scholar, one of whose daughters he married. In her biography

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3 Gabriele Rossetti, *La Vita Mia - Il Testamento* (Lanciano, 1910), 125 (my translation).

of Christina Rossetti, Frances Thomas illustrates how Rossetti often turned to Polidori for advice, almost as to a father figure.[4]

Another such father figure was Charles Lyell, the father of the more famous Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist. Like his son, Lyell senior was also interested in science, but was what we would call an amateur. Lyell epitomises a period in learning and scholarship, and a stage in the development of the figure of the academic. He lived in his estate at Kinnordy in Scotland, was an active naturalist and filled his library with books on natural history. It is his name, not his son's as one might at first surmise, that is attached to some mosses he classified. But he is also notable for having translated Dante's shorter poetry in a volume entitled *The Canzoniere of Dante Alighieri, Including the Poems of the Vita Nuova and Convito* (1835). In the very first sentence of his preface to his translation he says:

> The two remarkable works of Professor Rossetti, 'Il comento analitico della Divina Comedia' and 'Lo spirito antipapale di Dante' gave occasion to the following translations.[5]

Lyell senior still belongs to a generation of scholars who did not separate literature, religion and science into compartments. The languages of what are often considered three fairly distinct fields were shared, as were the methods. Imagination and scientific enquiry went hand in hand, as they do now, but as they were not seen to do, for a time, at the end of the nineteenth century. A very good example of an early attitude to this matter is to be found in S.T. Coleridge's ideas about the professional preparation for the writer of an epic poem:

> I should not think of devoting less than 20 years to an Epic poem. Ten to collect materials and warm my mind with universal science. I would be a tolerable Mathematician, I would thoroughly know Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Optics, and Astronomy, Botany, Metallurgy, Fossilism, Chemistry, Geology, Anatomy, Medicine – then the *mind of man* – then the *minds of men.* [6]

This was the time when Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of the more famous Darwin, published 'The Loves of the Plants' (1789), in which the classification of Linnaeus is turned into verse – and quite exciting verse

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4 Thomas, 17.

5 Preface to *The Canzoniere of Dante Alighieri, Including the Poems of the Vita Nuova and Convito* translated by Charles Lyell (London, 1835), vii.

6 S. T. Coleridge, Letter to his publisher, 1796, *Collected Letters*, I, 320.

at that, the sections about procreation being considered unsuitable reading for ladies. This poem went to form the second part of *The Botanic Garden* (1791), the first part being 'The Economy of Vegetation' which is full of descriptions of planned technological innovations. Poetry, therefore, registered the findings of science.[7]

But the younger Lyell belongs to a very different generation. It is interesting to read how he phrases some of his comments on the books he reads. In a letter to his friend and colleague Mantell, dated 2 March 1827, he says:

> I devoured Lamarck *en voyage*, as you did Sismondi, and with equal pleasure. His theories delighted me more than any novel I ever read, and much in the same way, for they address themselves to the imagination, at least of geologists who know the mighty inferences which would be deducible were they established by observations.[8]

Lamarck was an early thinker on evolution, who believed that adaptation to the environment in adult individuals had an evolutionary effect on its offspring. Such a theory was discarded by the later scientists, and indeed Lyell here groups it with 'novels.' But notice Lyell's view on the hierarchy of arts and sciences: novels might delight, but it is the 'mighty inferences' which are drawn from the method of observation and which are the subject of the sciences – particularly geology – that are seen as paramount.[9] Coleridge's hierarchy is here inverted (although we do not know whether Lyell considered epic poems closer to science). More importantly, for my argument, Lyell's words reveal a more general view – that there is a community of specialists, 'geologists,' who are separating themselves from other, less rigorous scholars. Rossetti's amateur stance and his ideological approach were to fall into disrepute. In the shift in attitude from Lyell father to Lyell son we observe a drastic change in method.

The shift is directly visible in Lyell father, who, having started as a patron of Rossetti, was eventually diverted from active support by the intervention of his son, who was probably worried that his own reputation

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7 See R. E. Schofield, *The Lunar Society of Birmingham* (Oxford, 1963).

8 *Life, Letters and Journals of Sir Charles Lyell, Bart,* edited by his sister in law, Mrs. Lyell, 2 vols. (London, 1881), I, 168.

9 For a discussion of Lyell's changing views on Lamarck, and for a specific historical study of various issues, see J. M. I. Klaver, *Geology and Religious Sentiment: The Effect of Geological Discoveries on English Society and Literature Between 1829 and 1859* (Leiden, 1997), esp. 50-55.

and academic future might be damaged by his father's friendship with someone who could be accused of atheism, or whose scholarship was in any case suspect, even though he was working, as Lyell junior eventually did, at King's College (later University College) London.[10] In the Preface of his translation Lyell senior had already questioned Rossetti's views, distancing himself from his work:

> To satisfy myself upon this point [Rossetti's interpretation] and the better to put the question to the test, I amused myself with making an acceptable contribution to literature, by drawing more attention to a very interesting controversy, and by supplying a supplement (however inferior) to the memorable work of Mr. Cary. [...] the reader, therefore, is presented merely with the literal sense of the text; for the allegorical and mystical sense he is referred to the writings of the single commentator who has attempted and hazarded their explanation (viii-ix).

But in the 1842 edition of his translation of Dante, Lyell added an essay on Rossetti's work entitled 'On the antipapal spirit of Dante' (taking up pages xli to cclxxxii of the volume), in which he condemns Rossetti's method. In fact, Rossetti had never argued that Dante was a heretic; indeed, he had stated that 'Tutto il suo poema, a chi di buona fede lo legga, [...] attesta un pensatore, si, ma sdegnoso di scismi e d'eresie, e consonissimo a tutte le cattoliche dottrine' ['His whole poem, when read in good faith, [...] reveals Dante to have been maybe an independent thinker, but one who rejects all schisms and heresies, and is in agreement with all Catholic doctrines']. Lyell quotes these words of Rossetti's. His aim is to explain that Rossetti's views are that Dante was merely against the Pope's power and against the way this worked within the tyrannical political system in Italy. The real offence, as becomes clear in Lyell's essay, is not in the religious views expressed, but in the method used. Rossetti's views are considered excessive, and Lyell issues a

> warning not to suppose that the scope of the *Comedia* can be divined by a careless perusal of insulated [sic] passages, but only from a deep consideration of those that stand in opposition to each other, and a fair adjustment of the balance, unless due weight is given to the foregoing extracts [...].[11]

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10 See P. Horne and J. R. Woodhouse, 'Gabriele Rossetti and Charles Lyell: New Light on an Old Friendship,' *Italian Studies: A Quarterly Review*, 38 (1983), 70-86.

11 *The Poems of the Vita Nuova and Convito of Dante Alighieri*, translated by Charles Lyell, a.m., formerly fellow of St. Peter's College, Cambridge, Italian and English (London. C. F. Molini, 1842), lx.

Thus, Lyell supports the application of a systematic method of analysis, and we should not underestimate the precision of words such as 'fair adjustment of the balance' and 'due weight.' Lyell condemns here the possible error of subjectivism. This episode sheds light on different positions within the culture of the times; Lyell's essay was translated into Italian and published in England in the same year (1842) by no other than Polidori.

It is not easy to assess the reasons behind Polidori's version, which is riddled with contradictions. Like Lyell, he might have been attempting to protect Rossetti from possible charges of irreligion. By changing its title, he certainly gives a religious turn to the presentation of the essay. Whereas Rossetti's title was *Sullo spirito antipapale di Dante* and Lyell had followed this closely in his 'On the antipapal spirit of Dante Alighieri,' Polidori changed this into *Dello spirito cattolico di Dante Alighieri (On the Catholic spirit of Dante Alighieri)*. In essence, there is no contradiction with the spirit of Rossetti's views, as I have pointed out, but this would hardly appeal to the anti-Catholic feelings of much of English society at that time. Another odd detail about Polidori's translation is that he introduces Lyell's authorship as 'Opera di Carlo Lyell, ministro anglicano di Kinnordy in Scozia, gia socio del collegio di S. Pietro in Cambrigia,' whereas Lyell had described himself merely as 'Charles Lyell, a.m., formerly fellow of St. Peter's College, Cambridge.'[12] If this were a reputation-saving exercise concocted by Rossetti's friends, Polidori would surely have known that Lyell was not an Anglican minister. Be all this as it may, it remains clear that religion is brought to the fore by Polidori in various ways.

Following his son's guidance, Lyell learned to adapt to the specialisation and scientific methods required by the academic world in England in the 1830s and 1840s. Rossetti did not – he was clearly unable to. Like many migrants, his horizon remained frozen at the moment of his escape. He left this struggle between two moments and cultures as a legacy to his children. In his autobiography, Gabriele Rossetti charges his children with a heavy task:

12 'Dello spirito cattolico di Dante Alighieri, Opera di Carlo Lyell, ministro anglicano di Kinnordy in Scozia, gia socio del Collegio di S. Pietro in Cambrigia, tradotto dall'originale inglese da Gaetano Polidori,' *Estratto dagli annali delle scienze religiose*, serie II, fasc. IX, 338.

D'uopo non è ch'io cinghia spada ed elmo
Sdegnoso ad assalir chi me'l contrasta;
Maria, cristina, gabriel, guglielmo,
Voi, figli miei, risponderete, e basta.
Per confonder gl'increduli nemici
Son condotta e talento armi felici.[13]

[There is no need for me to don sword and helm
As I disdain to attack those who contest my views;
Maria, Christina, Gabriel, William,
You, my children, will answer; that is enough.
To confound the unbelieving enemies.
Conduct and talent are felicitous weapons.]

Thus, the Rossetti children not only entered into a culture which was undergoing a profound change, but did so bearing the burden – or the gift – of a special legacy. In the remaining pages, I will focus briefly on each of the four young Rossettis, pausing a while longer on Maria Francesca, who has received very little attention so far.

William Michael is fully ensconced in the English culture and society of his day, and probably thanks to this, could quite comfortably go to Italy regularly – on holiday, the stance of the visitor being more comfortable to one who is certain of returning home afterwards. He became the chronicler of his family, and, in particular, decided to offer 'to the British public a record of his patriotic, highly gifted, laborious and loving father' by producing an English version of his father's autobiography in verse.[14] It is typical of William Michael that he should select the different, though perhaps complementary qualifiers 'highly gifted' and 'laborious,' for he always paid careful attention to the academic requirements of natural, personal insight and hard, rigorous work. Hence, he sees this autobiography as a 'record,' which he not only 'translated' but also 'supplemented,' presumably in order to increase its value as an objective testimony. His perceptiveness and sensitivity to matters of originality, personal genius and imagination are evidenced by his work on Walt Whitman (whose poetry he insisted on publishing, in spite of opposition from the publisher),[15] in the introduction to which we read:

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13 *La Vita Mia*, 125.

14 Gabriele Rossetti, *A Versified Autobiography* translated and supplemented by W. M. Rossetti (London, 1901).

15 See his diary entry for Thursday, 28 April 1870, *The Diary of W. M. Rossetti 1870-1873* O. Bornand (ed.) (Oxford, 1977), 12.

'Whitman's poems present no trace of rhyme, save in a couple or so of chance instances. [...] Still there is a very powerful and majestic rhythmical sense throughout,' or 'The book, then [his collected poems], taken as a whole, is the poem both of Personality and of Democracy; and, it may be added, of American nationalism. It is *par excellence* the modern poem.' This appreciation of Whitman's achievement in giving a voice to the individual and to society culminates in his assertion that 'the greatest of this poet's distinctions is his absolute and entire originality.'[16] In all of his work as a chronicler (of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, for example), critic, interpreter, translator, editor and bibliographer, William Michael exhibited this same respect for genius. However, this was balanced by the application of a systematic approach, often including even statistics. In the words of a critic, his was a 'talent for minute and dispassionate scrutiny which enabled him to convey to his readers his calm enthusiasm.'[17]

Similarly capable of creating a synthesis between opposing forces was Maria Francesca, whose *Shadow of Dante* (1871) offers perhaps the clearest example of the attempt at a synthesis of her father's legacy and the methods more strictly required for rigorous scholarly work, being closest in nature to her father's work. This most beautiful book is also a good scholarly work, with clear and informative diagrams. On the title page, Maria Francesca dedicates the volume 'to the beloved memory of my father.' She further celebrates the family by mentioning early on that, for quotations from the *Inferno*, she has used her brother's, William Michael's, translation. But in her discussion she firmly takes up her own position. For example, when describing and commenting on the appearance of Dis, at the end of *Inferno*, she states: 'My theory, wholly suggested by my father, is yet not absolutely identical with his.'[18]

Maria Francesca is very precise in her recounting of the literal sense of the text. She mentions that twenty-two hours had 'by this time elapsed since the opening of the poem,' twelve in the woods, ten in Hell.[19] She often refers to the historical reality of Dante's times, in terms, of course, of the knowledge available and considered important in her day.

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16 Prefatory Notice to *Poems of Walt Whitman* selected and edited by W. M. Rossetti (London, 1895), 2-5.

17 Bornand, xxiii.

18 Maria Francesca Rossetti, *The Shadow of Dante* (1871), 62.

19 *Ibid.*, 77.

So she reminds the reader that they have to 'keep in mind [...] the medieval tone of thought,' and she also informs them of the finding of Dante's bones, and that 'the cavity of the cranium being filled with rice, the weight of this was ascertained to be 1420 grammes,' this being followed by further specifications: 'Prof. Huxley states that the heaviest brain weighed by Professor Wagner – that of a woman, amounted to 1872 grammes; next comes the brain of Cuvier (1861), then Byron (1807) and then an insane person (1783); the lightest adult brain recorded (720) was that of an idiotic female.'[20] As if the work of these two professors was not enough, more phrenological information follows, and all is based – so we are told – on the report of an Italian government committee set up to assess the finding of Dante's bones. This had been published in 1865, and was, therefore, recent research. Such specifications of weights and measures do not form the basis for an intricate system of interpretation, but are left for what they are – factual information placed at the reader's disposal.

When the writer has to go into the allegorical significance of the poem, she does so by applying the method commended by Lyell. Finding some apparent contradiction in the presentation of Beatrice as a real person and as Human Science, she is careful to bring in a quotation from the *Vita Nuova* (with a description of Dante meeting Beatrice) followed by a passage from the *Convito* (where Dante calls Beatrice Philosophy, and then states he has been consoled by Lady Philosophy)[21] in order to link the two views of Beatrice. It is on these passages that she supports this reading of Beatrice which unites literal sense with allegorical sense – a reading shared in any case by many others. She could hardly have been more methodical and accurate, and indeed, she seems to be heeding Lyell's warning, quoted above, of the need for 'a deep consideration of [passages] that stand in opposition to each other, and a fair adjustment of the balance' between them. In addition to being methodical and accurate, she very frequently introduced scientific matters, such as weights, measures and calculations, alongside the references to history and biography. Indeed, the author states: 'Read Dante, and you shall know what at the end of the 13th century and beginning of the 14th – among the most intellectual people of the west – were the highest attainments of physical science.'[22]

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20 *Ibid.*, 31.
21 *La Vita Nuova and Convito*, 22-23, 191.
22 *The Shadow*, 4.

Moving to the two major poets, Gabriel Dante's later inversion of his name to Dante Gabriel – a matter of his public persona, since he was always Gabriel to the family – and his occasional insertion of Italian words in a painting could suggest a self-aggrandizing gesture or the exploitation of his southern background. But it could also be the vehicle and visible sign of his awareness of his father's legacy. One of the poetic works for which he is most famous is the collection of translations first published as *The Early Italian Poets together with Dante's Vita Nuova*, later called *Dante and his Circle* (1861, 1874). The two titles indicate both Rossetti's recognition of poetic brotherhoods, and a historicist consideration of the past. In these translations, just as in his own poetry, there are two main impulses at work: a tendency towards generalizations and representation of personified concepts; and a sharp presentation of minute detail. Rather than discuss these issues at any length, I refer the reader to Jerome McGann's recent *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game that Must Be Lost*, which provides a much more sustained discussion than anything I could engage in at this point. In the study just mentioned, MacGann reminds us of Dante Gabriel's 'meticulous and accurate rendering of painterly details,' of his accurate observation and scientific, as it were, rendering of physical objects and their surfaces. The critic also points out how by '[h]ighlighting the apparent medievalism of his subject matter, Rossetti historicizes the whole symbolic field.' Both historical and painterly *foci* are in the service of what McGann calls a 'Christographic symbology,' that is, a secular use of Christian symbols.[23] The latter, in itself, is not a unique trait of Dante Gabriel's poetry. In fact, it is much more typical of the poetry of Algernon Swinburne, who was very conscious of this aspect of his art and discussed it specifically with William Michael Rossetti.[24] It is the combination of all these elements into the creation of 'a new kind of devotional activity' (devotion 'to painterly practice' and 'to the practice of criticism,')[25] that shows how Dante Gabriel created his own synthesis of his father's concerns (history, religious questions and symbolism), adding to them his own close observation and record of minute visual details.

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23 J. MacGann, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game that Must be Lost* (New Haven & London, 2000), 30.

24 See the entry, in W. M. R.'s diary, for Wednesday, 11 May 1870, Bornand, 8.

25 MacGann, 32.

As for Christina, her lifelong devotion to her mother and her initial reticence about appearing as an Italian author should not blind us to a significant shift in her work, especially in her prose. I am referring partly to her two articles on Dante, but particularly to one of her so-called devotional works, *Time Flies: A Reading Diary* (1885). Here, she frequently inserts Italian proverbs, quoted in Italian. In this way, she is present in the text in her own voice – which is an Italian voice. An awareness that, as Jan Marsh reports, 'Papa was fond of [Italian] aphorisms'[26] indicates that Christina Rossetti's acceptance and public presentation of her Italian identity and voice therefore coincide with the acceptance and integration of part of her father's legacy.[27]

Time Flies is also highly autobiographical. It is here that we find references to her one journey in Italy, for example, and also the few descriptions of nature in her work. The famous references to the disappointingly drab Italian poppies, the noble cattle and mean pigs, and particularly her own reaction to the Alps are all in this volume. Critics have picked out passages from *Time Flies* to illustrate Christina's detailed and insightful descriptions of nature. Indeed, a millipede's numerous offspring, a spider's movements, and the call of jackdaws are closely observed and described. The purpose of such close observations, however, is to interpret them as so many '"Parable[s] of Nature."'[28] Indeed, *Time Flies* is also full of remarks on the natural sciences. Each remark, however, is followed by a devotional comment. So, after observing the refraction of light through beautiful and precious objects, and then also through a broken oxidised bottle, Rossetti remarks, 'Let us be thankful for dim rainbows.'[29] It is in such sudden shifts that lengthy descriptions of physical objects give way to cryptic devotional aphorisms. *Time Flies* is studded with such shifts. One further example, even clearer in its use of scientific language, will suffice:

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26 J. Marsh, *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography* (London, 1994), 7.

27 I have discussed this at greater length in 'Action and reticence: Christina Rossetti and Algernon Swinburne' in *Private and Public Voices in Victorian Poetry* S. Coelsch-Foisner and H. Klein (eds.) (Tübingen, 2000), 187-198.

28 *Time Flies; A Reading Diary* (London, 1897), 121.

29 *Ibid.*, 134.

A pebble dropped into a pool disturbs the water in a circle widening without definite boundaries.
Motion displaces air, nor can we assign any limit to the extent of such displacement.
Earth revolving within space carries along with itself its own vast atmosphere.
And more or less like each of these, personal influence is certain and is incalculable.[30]

To become impatient with such lessons is to miss the function they have in Christina Rossetti's art. Her focus is minute as well as sweeping, because she is moved by a vision of nature as a realm of symbol; nature is closely scanned for devotional signs. This is the gift that Christina's religion, in its less formalistic mode, gave her art and her poetry: it opened her eyes, as it were, so that she could see the world in the light of eternity, and read a representative, mystical story into what she saw.

Both Gabriel and Christina inherited from their father a complex combination of allegory, mysticism, and a sense of history, with art as the overarching force. To this they added the detailed and sustained, scientific observation of nature, which was growing in importance in their time. It is from such a combination that the best of their art derives.

Tensions, clashes, and attempts at syntheses of these elements are the stuff of Victorian literature and art. At home, therefore, within the English culture of their day, the Rossetti's talent flourished in the environment of the country of their birth and was made more keen and profound by their inheritance of an Italian culture. The difference between the two generations is well described by their father in his autobiography:

V'invidio, o figli miei; [...]
Voi liberi nasceste, io nacqui servo,
Voi siete in patria, ed in esiglio io sono.[31]

[I envy you, my children, [...]
You were born free, I a slave,
You are in your mother country, whereas I am in exile.]

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30 *Ibid.*, 158.
31 *La Vita Mia*, 127.

'Daughter of th'Italian heaven!': Madame de Staël's *Corinne* in England

Petra Bianchi

Madame de Staël's life and political interests are an important background to her writings. Her exile from France, her celebrated position as an enemy of Napoleon and, significantly, her interest in the dynamics of the artistic, cultural and political life of European countries (whether Germany, France, England or Italy), are all necessary keys to understanding the novel *Corinne*.

The action of *Corinne* is partly set during the winter of 1794-95 (slightly earlier than Napoleon's campaign of 1796), and continues four years later. Apart from relating a love story in the novel, Madame de Staël was also analysing and presenting to her French audience the life and culture of foreign nations – in this case contrasting England with Italy. This is a very important characteristic of her work as a whole, and she repeats the exercise very successfully and famously in a much more detailed and non-fictional form in her later work about the German nation, *De l'Allemagne* (1813). In both *Corinne* and *De l'Allemagne*, the national characters under scrutiny are dissected in long disquisitions on art, religion, architecture, traditions, music, and geography.

In 1813, Mme. de Staël visited England (her second and most important visit to the country), where she spent almost a year. She was by then a famous and celebrated figure, both as a result of her literary achievements and also due to her opposition to Napoleon - which automatically endowed her with the status of a political ally of England. Her political prestige certainly played an important role in her extremely positive reception by the British public.

She had numerous famous friends in England, and met a large number of the important literary and intellectual figures of the day, including Henry Crabb Robinson, Sir James Mackintosh, Byron (with whom she developed an unusual friendship which included both mutual admiration and much mutual criticism), Maria Edgeworth, Robert Southey, and many others.

It was not only her works, particularly *De l'Allemagne*, which brought her lasting fame in England, but also her life – she was quite a celebrity and her activities and travels were closely watched and gossiped about until her death in 1817 and beyond.

A great many aspects of the life of the protagonist Corinne – her personality, love intrigues, interests, and cultural background – were taken by readers to reflect the personal life of the book's author – to the extent that Corinne almost seems to serve as a fictional double of Mme. de Staël herself. As in the case of her acquaintance and friend Lord Byron and his *Childe Harolde* (1812), Mme. de Staël's own life was largely associated with that of her fictional heroine. In the book itself, a significant number of the 'travelogue' episodes are based upon the author's personal experiences when travelling in Italy – whether meeting the Arcadian school of poets, ascending Vesuvius outside Naples, or visiting the sites of Rome – so an autobiographical interpretation is in part justified, and certainly sheds interesting light on the narrative sequence of the novel.

Mme. de Staël's earlier novel *Delphine* (1802) had not been well received in England. Although fairly widely read, it was dismissed by the respectable reading public as immoral. *Corinne*, on the other hand, achieved lasting popularity among the nineteenth-century British reading public. It was translated into English immediately after its publication in 1807, and went through no less than forty editions between the years 1807 and 1872 (apart from the 32 French editions between the years 1830 and 1870 alone).

In the year of its publication, *Corinne* was reviewed favourably in England in both the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Monthly Review*. The *Edinburgh* described it as 'lively,' 'picturesque' and 'original' while finding its depiction of the English character of Lord Nelvil to be somewhat exaggerated and harsh – yet, at the same time, displaying evidence that she had observed the character and manners of the English with notable sensitivity:

> Madame de Staël, as appears from almost every part of this work, has studied with great care the character and manners of the English. She has done so also with singular success; and, though all her notions may not be perfectly correct, we believe that hardly any foreigner, who has not resided long in England, ever approached so near to the truth [...] though perhaps with a little of that involuntary exaggeration that mere contrast can hardly fail to produce. The coldness of manner in the English ladies, their reserve and want of animation, are painted too harshly, even though a large share of understanding and accomplishment is allowed them. [...] Much is said through the whole book, of the effect of climate; and the sun of Italy is never mentioned but with [...] enthusiasm [...].[1]

1 *Edinburgh Review*, XI (1807-8), 192f.

The reviewer in the *Edinburgh* recognised that 'it is Great Britain and Italy, the extremes of civilised Europe, that are personified and contrasted in the hero and heroine of this romantic tale.'[2] This interpretation has been taken up by Ellen Moers, who contrasts Corinne with her half-sister Lucile in terms of northern and southern European culture: 'Corinne represents the passionate exuberance of dark-haired Latin culture, and Lucile, her blond rival, stands for the subdued and inhibited sensibility of Nordic culture, along with all that is implied by the home, the wife, and the private virtues in English society.'[3] According to Moers, the love affair between Oswald and Corinne is primarily concerned with the meeting and contradictions of two cultures: '[...] what Madame de Staël puts at issue is no simple *amour*, but the total transformation of cultural attitudes (and perhaps of civilisation itself) by the romance of the woman of genius.'[4]

Corinne therefore functions on one level as an allegory of Italy. The heroine represents the imaginative and emotional side of Italy – and is repeatedly contrasted with the male protagonist, Lord Nelvil, who does not only illustrate the stereotyped, more reserved British character but also represents the British political institutions, liberalism and democracy which Mme. de Staël admired immensely. Corinne herself is, importantly, also half-English, the daughter of an English father and an Italian mother. Yet Italy remains Corinne's country of choice.

The link between Corinne and Italy is clearly pointed out in the full title of the novel, *Corinne, or Italy*, and also early on in the narrative when we first meet Corinne improvising to the public on the Capitol hill in Rome. Here she is described to Oswald by Prince Castel-Forte (who immediately after this statement is declared by Mme. de Staël to be a man who speaks 'with unusual wisdom') as an image of Italy itself:

> Look at her, she is the image of our beautiful Italy; [...] we delight in gazing at her as an admirable product of our climate and of our arts, as an offshoot of the past, as a harbinger of the future.[5]

The novel therefore employs the idea of travel and clashing of cultures to display the differences between the mind-sets of the north and

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2 *Ibid.*, 183.
3 E. Moers, *Literary Women* (1963 repr. London, 1978), 175.
4 *Ibid.*, 181.
5 Madame de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy* (1807 repr. Oxford, 1998), 27.

the south of Europe – cultural prejudice is one of the pivotal themes of the book. The act of travelling from one country to another, of witnessing at first hand the life, ideas and landscape of another culture, is presented as a means of liberating the mind, of deepening and also educating the emotions, and in particular, of escaping from cold, rational and reserved northern habits of mind.

Importance is placed on the effect of climate upon national character. For example, in Chapter 5 entitled 'Tombs, Churches and Palaces,' Oswald remarks that these sombre monuments are well-suited to his melancholy disposition, and goes on to remark to Corinne that the Italian character is much more light-hearted and carefree, associating this quality with the weather: 'In your happy country sombre thoughts disappear in the brightness of the skies,'[6] he announces to her gravely, while assuring her that his own life has been shattered by sorrow right to the depths of his soul and that the weather therefore can have no cheering effect on him personally although it may do so on others.

The link between Corinne and Italian culture is emphasised in the numerous detailed sections describing Italy throughout the book – the novel almost functions as a guidebook to the historical and artistic sites and achievements of Italy. It was, in fact, later used as such by educated English travellers throughout the nineteenth century. Frances Trollope, for example, relied on information and attitudes to Italy obtained from *Corinne*, and in her novel *The Robertses on their Travels* (1846), the young girl, Bertha, goes sightseeing and uses *Corinne* as her guide, retracing the steps of Corinne and Lord Nelvil:

> Of all the books treating of Rome and its marvels, the 'Corinne' of Madame de Staël had made the deepest impression. It was in fact her handbook, her *vade mecum*, her delight [...]. To see all that Corinne saw, was the first wish of her heart, and the first resolve of her bold young spirit.[7]

The importance of *Corinne* as an introduction to Italy extended right up to the end of the nineteenth century – as late as 1875, Henry James described his characters Mary Garland and Mrs. Hudson as reading *Corinne* in preparation for their trip to Italy, in his novel *Roderick Hudson*.

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6 *Ibid.*, 76.

7 Frances Trollope, *The Robertses on their Travels* (London, 1846), Vol. III, 70.

Corinne reflects the love for Italy which characterised so many of the major works of Romanticism, including Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. It did not, however, simply function as a guide to the historical sites, but also as a model for the appropriate emotional response to Italy expected from an educated and sensitive traveller of the period.

While travellers of the neo-classical period and the traditional 'Grand Tour' took it for granted and indeed fully expected to share the sights, responses, contacts and attitudes of their predecessors when travelling through Italy – to the point that full appreciation of the country would only be complete when they had done and seen exactly what everyone else before them had done and seen – Romantic and post-Romantic travellers were overcome with the new urge that everything they did was somehow 'belated' and not original enough. They preferred to get away from the traditional attitudes and routes, and were proud of displaying a disdainful attitude to imitation and stock responses to Italy.

In this context, Mme. de Staël's *Corinne* provided a new example to follow – the intense emotions evoked by the Italian scenery and experienced by Lord Nelvil and Corinne were imitated by readers of the novel, who applied them to their own experiences of the country. The novel served as an illustration of how to appreciate the traditional Italian sites, while at the same time providing the necessary cultural knowledge combined with the suggestion of a sought-after and desirable original and individual response:

> Corinne provided 'travellers' with a script for being original, in the sense of obeying one's unique inner dictates; it suggested that the goal could be accomplished by anyone properly sensitive.[8]

Apart from the travelling English public, Mme. de Staël's *Corinne* also functioned as an important role model for many young women in Victorian England with literary ambitions. The exotic and new figure of the female artist performing in public – the *improvisatrice* – opened up their minds to the possibility that women were capable of participating in the public sphere of the world of literature and the arts. Corinne, together with her poetic ancestor Sappho, embodied the literary aspirations of the Victorian woman. Although both paid the price of sacrificing happiness in love for

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8 J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford, 1993), 111.

poetry, the images of Corinne and Sappho gave the hope of success and recognition to budding female poets at the time.

Mme. de Staël's heroine presented a contrast between the possibilities available to English women – represented in the novel as demure, passive and servile – and those available to an imaginary, foreign, exotic woman, who was free to indulge in art and love. In the novel, Corinne appears to allegorise the Italian landscape itself, utilised as a metaphor for artistic and sexual freedom. In the words of Ellen Moers, '*Corinne* served as a children's book for a special kind of nineteenth-century child: girls of more than ordinary intelligence or talent, and rising ambition to fame beyond the domestic circle. Reading *Corinne* made an event of their youth – for some, a catalyst to their own literary development [...].'[9]

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) is based, to a large extent, on Mme. de Staël's *Corinne*. When only twenty-six years old, Barrett Browning proclaimed that *Corinne* was 'an immortal book, and deserves to be read three score and ten times – that is once every year in the age of man.' Barrett Browning admired not only De Staël's heroine, but also the novel itself. In a letter of 1842 to her friend Miss Mitford, she praised the passion and sensibility of Mme. de Staël's writing style:

> There are occasional florid passages, to be sure, in Mme. de Staël [...]. The French critics cried aloud I know, and spared not, against her want of classicism and departure from the models. Let them cry! Who can be insensible to the warmth of colouring, the masterdom of outline [...] the eloquent weeping and laughter of her style. It is eloquence [...].[10]

The popular Victorian poet Letitia Elizabeth Landon's celebrated *L'Improvisatrice* (1824) and 'The History of the Lyre' both employ the figure of the *improvisatrice* as protagonist. Eulalie in 'The History of the Lyre' laments that she has not followed the accepted domestic role set for women and instead lives a different sort of life as a performer. She is isolated, almost an outcast or 'castaway.' A woman performing in public in the early part of the nineteenth-century was socially unacceptable, and could well be likened to a prostitute. L.E.L.'s Eulalie has not become a wife or mother; she is not a home-maker and has,

9 Moers, 174.

10 B. Miller (ed.) *Elizabeth Barrett to Miss Mitford* (London, 1954), 159.

therefore, foregone the Victorian woman's supreme fulfilment. She is a person who lives in the public sphere rather than in a private or domestic one, and is recognised as such by those around her. Her public role diminishes her position and respectability within the community.

One important aspect of the Italian setting in the book is the advantage that in contrast to the socially strict, moralistic, conventional and generally intolerant behaviour prevalent in nineteenth-century middle class England, Italy's sunny climate is presented as a catalyst for tolerance of social lapses, relaxed social decorum and flexible attitudes. This enables Corinne herself to behave much more freely than her English equivalent Lucile – and also to be judged less harshly by Lord Nelvil: 'In England he would have judged such a woman very severely, but he did not apply any of the social conventions to Italy. Corinne's coronation aroused in him the kind of expectant interest he would have taken in one of Ariosto's tales.'[11]

Apart from this freedom afforded by the climates and conventions of differing nations, Mme. de Staël also frees Corinne from restricting social norms by playing with the romantic notion of the artist as a person of heightened sensibility set aside to some degree from the community. According to this viewpoint, artists almost belonged to a social category of their own, subject to different criteria and able to deal with the usual family ties and obligations in unconventional ways.

Yet the flipside of this idea is that the artist was also doomed to unhappiness – whether due to an inevitable hand of fate linking genius with misfortune, or because the artist was destined to suffer because of heightened sensitivity and susceptibility to problems - the idea was that a person of genius was doomed to an unhappy life.

The poet Felicia Hemans (1793-1835) illustrates this idea of the suffering woman artist in her poem 'Corinne at the Capitol' (1817), written as a response to Mme. de Staël's novel. The scene is that during which Corinne is crowned with a laurel wreath on the Capitol hill in Rome in the early part of the book. Hemans' poem describes the happiness of a wife as being far greater than that of the celebrated Corinne:

Happier, happier far than thou,
With the laurel on thy brow,
She that makes the humblest hearth
Lovely but to one on earth!

11 *Corinne*, 22.

A woman artist – inspired by the image of Sappho - was by definition straying from her traditional role as a silent, servile, repressed and modest individual – and was to expect pain, suffering and betrayal as a result. Corinne's suffering and unhappiness in love was received as a just and fitting retribution for her unconventional lifestyle dedicated to art and display.

It is important to remember that a happy ending for a woman like Corinne, who lived an unconventional and rebellious life, would have been inconceivable for the period during which the novel was written. Corinne could not, like a man, dedicate her life to her career and renounce love completely – this would have been unthinkable to the contemporary audience. Her career in itself prevented her from being happy in love according to the conventions of the day.

Yet, even in spite of the unhappy conclusions and miserable fate which awaited young women keen to try their hands at a career in the arts, many of them idolised Corinne and were very influenced by the book. We even find Byron himself telling a correspondent that he had reprimanded Mme. de Staël for presenting such a dangerous and bad example to impressionable young women:

> I continued saying, how dangerous it was to inculcate the belief that genius, talent, acquirements, and accomplishments, such as Corinne was represented to possess, could not preserve a woman from being a victim to an unrequited passion, and that reason, absence, and female pride were unavailing. I told her that 'Corinne' would be considered, if not cited, as an excuse for violent passions, by all young ladies with imaginations exalte, and that she had much to answer for.[12]

This concern was not unfounded and its consequences are reflected throughout the century's literature – in Geraldine Jewsbury's popular novel, *The Half-Sisters* (1848), for example, one of the female protagonists is entranced and very influenced by Mme. de Staël's novel.

In 1865, Christina Rossetti wrote the poem 'Italia, io ti saluto!' inspired by a recent trip to Italy. This Italian title to a poem written in English is taken from Mme. de Staël's *Corinne*. When Oswald first sees Corinne she is in the process of being crowned on the Capitol hill in Rome, where she is requested to produce an *ex tempore* poem for her

12 M. Gardiner Blessington, *Conversations of Lord Byron* (Princeton, 1969), 26.

audience. She chooses to improvise a poem on the subject of Italy, and the English translation of the poem begins, 'Italy, empire of the sun; mistress of the world; Italy, cradle of literature; I salute you!'[13] For a brief moment, Christina adopts the *persona* of the *improvisatrice*, likewise writing an ode to Italy, using the same opening words as Corinne.

As a young girl, Christina was very influenced by the popular image of the *improvisatrice*, and was encouraged in this role by the example set by her father. Gabriele Rossetti (1783-1854) himself belonged to the last wave of poets of the *Italian Arcadian Academy*, originally established in Rome around the middle of the seventeenth century and eventually forming so-called 'colonies' all over Italy – with Gabriele Rossetti belonging to the Naples branch at the turn of the nineteenth century, some 150 years after the founding of the school.

Mme. de Staël was also received by the Arcadians in Rome, and attended several performances of poetry given by the famous *improvvisatore* Vincenzo Monti, who became her lifelong friend. In Rome, she attended an evening at the *Bosco Parrasio*, the main seat of the Arcadians, where she was asked to recite a poem. This, however, was not done spontaneously – in anticipation, she had brought a prepared poem with her – which was a great success with the company present.

Although Victorian women admired the figures of Sappho and Corinne, they also knew that improvisation was considered to be a 'feminine' kind of poetry in England because it was apparently easy and spontaneous. Felicia Hemans regarded what William Michael Rossetti described as the 'readiness approaching improvisation' with which her verse was written as a blemish rather than as something positive or 'feminine.' The idea of the female *improvisatrice* was encouraged by many Victorian male critics, as they preferred women to remain in a separate sphere as writers, supposedly relying on different methods of composition and inspiration, always close to nature and their own sensibilities 'rather than intruding upon the masculine domain of art and dabbling in intellectual pursuits.'[14]

Yet, in spite of the interest of female poets in *Corinne*, the novel was not conceived as a feminist work in any polemical sense. What

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13 *Corinne*, 28.

14 G. Stephenson, 'Letitia Landon and the Victorian Improvisatrice: the Construction of L.E.L.,' *Victorian Poetry*, 30 (1992), 1-17.

Mme. de Staël does instead is 'show that regional or national or what we call cultural values determine female destiny even more rigidly, even more inescapably than male.'[15] As in Madame de Staël's other works, the focus of the novel is placed primarily on cultural and national values and characteristics.

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15 Moers, 207.

T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and the Dantean 'familiar compound ghost' in *Little Gidding*

Peter Vassallo

In a personal essay *Remembering Eliot* Stephen Spender relates an anecdote concerning a talk he was asked to give about W.B. Yeats, at T.S. Eliot's request, to the *Tomorrow Club* during the war – two years after Yeats's death in 1939.[1] Eliot according to Spender, took the chair giving Spender the impression that he did this in order to avoid giving the lecture himself. Spender's embarrassment was considerable: he was about to deliver the lecture with Eliot at his side (rather like an undergraduate in front of a formidable tutor) and feeling the effects of sherry and brandy offered by Eliot before the lecture, he admits he was overcome by liquor and in the course of the lecture kept saying 'T.S. Eliot' when he actually meant 'W.B.Yeats.' This confusing of the two literary giants was not, I think, entirely due to influence of liquor but to the plain fact that, to the poet Spender's mind, these predominant modern poets tended to merge.

Eliot, ever anxious to be remembered among the greats of the twentieth century, as Peter Ackroyd records in his fine biography, counted himself with Yeats as the two dominant literary figures of the century.[2] Herbert Read remarked that he was fond of referring to himself in the company of distinguished poets – 'Valery, Yeats and I.' T.S. Eliot had, in fact, been invited to give the first Yeats memorial lecture in Dublin in June 1940 – an apt image of succession, as Peter Ackroyd puts it, in his biography of Eliot.

In the course of this essay, I should like to focus on Eliot's consciousness of Yeats's predominance as a poet and the effect of this on the composition of the central 'recognition' passage in *Little Gidding*. Eliot was acquainted with most of Yeats's later poetry especially *Cuchulain Comforted*, Yeats's strange Dantean poem written in terza rima, in which Yeats had been inspired by Dante in expressing antithetical

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1 Stephen Spender, 'Remembering Eliot' in *T.S. Eliot: The Man and his Work* Allen Tate (ed.) (London, 1967).

2 P. Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot* (London, 1984).

notions of the afterlife. In this poem, the brave Cuchulain in the afterlife finds himself a shade sitting among cowards who thread needles and sing, (in Yeatsean terms, he had reached the epitome of his antithetical self). The image of the tailor peering at the needle in the gloam is strongly reminiscent of Dante's celebrated scene in the *Inferno* where the shades are described as peering in the 'waning dusk' like an old tailor at the eye of the needle ('come il vecchio sartor fa nella cruna') the image, in fact, which immediately precedes Brunetto Latini's recognition of his pupil Dante, an encounter which Eliot singled out for its suggestive dramatic quality.[3] In all probability, as Frank Kermode has suggested, this Dantesque poem may well have inspired Eliot's Dantean recognition scene in *Little Gidding*.[4]

Little Gidding, the last of the *Four Quartets* and the culmination of the poem, is Dantean in its inspiration but it is at the same time an intensely personal poem. Eliot had visited the place earlier and it was associated in his mind with Nicholas Ferrar's little religious community living in poverty and prayer which was destroyed by Cromwell's parliamentary troops in 1646, itself a symbol of peaceful religious community eradicated by fire. This final movement was composed in London, during the blitz, the first tentative draft being completed in July 1941.[5] Eliot noted in a description which preceded the composition of the passage that the dominant image was to be the 'daemonic fire, The inferno. They vanish the individuals, and our feeling for them sinks into the flame which refines' – this last phrase being lifted directly from Dante's memorable account of his meeting with his former mentor, Brunetto Latini, in the *Inferno*. (There are echoes too of his meeting with the provençal poet 'il miglior fabbro' Arnaut Daniel). The Dantean infernal echoes mingle with the devastation of the city of London in flames during the blitz (in the winter of 1940-1) to give the impression of the unreal infernal city evoked in the early part of the *Waste Land*. The earlier version of this passage in the Magdalene College, Cambridge drafts is

3 T.S. Eliot, *Dante* (London, 1929).

4 F. Kermode, 'A Babylonish Dialect' in *T.S. Eliot: The Man and his Work* Allen Tate (ed.) (London, 1967).

5 H. Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* (London, 1978) See also S. McDougal 'T.S. Eliot's Metaphysical Dante' in *Dante Among the Moderns* S. Mc Dougal (ed.) (The University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

explicit in its reference to daemonic fire, of individuals sinking into the flame which refines. The final version of the text while retaining its purgatorial aspect of the refining fire (which informs Dante's encounter with Arnaut Daniel in the *Purgatorio*) is also highly suggestive of Dante's meeting with Brunetto Latini. Eliot, in one of the earlier drafts of his movement in *Little Gidding,* had inserted a direct reference to the ghost of Brunetto, 'Are you here, Ser Brunetto,' literally echoing Dante. On revising the text Eliot, as Helen Gardner had demonstrated, eliminated this direct echo, which was in effect an awkward piece of literary ventriloquism. The voice of the Italian master had become too distinct and had to be suppressed from an artistic point of view. In his letter to John Hayward, (27 August 1942), Eliot expressed his concern about the fact that this particular shade or visionary figure encountered in *Little Gidding* would be identified by the reader with Yeats, an identification which he found embarrassing, and which he shrugged off facetiously:

> I do not wish to take the responsibility of putting Yeats or anybody else into Hell and I do not want to impute the particular vice which took Brunetto there.[6]

A touch of the absurd here, for Yeats the poet who raged against the impotence of old age, was certainly not a homosexual or sodomite as was Brunetto who in Dante's moralistic scheme of things was punished accordingly.

There was probably another more important reason for excluding Yeats, which Eliot does not mention. This has to do with the dominating influence of Yeats which somehow had to be exorcised if the poem was to retain its spirit of general impersonality, distinguishing, as Eliot believed it should, between the man who suffered and the artist who created.

But, in spite of Eliot's suppression of the reference to Yeats, the lines (in the second movement) are strongly reminiscent of the Irish poet. In fact, the extract in *Little Gidding*, as scholars have perceived,[7] bristles

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6 In a letter to John Hayward (27 August 1942) cited by S. Mc Dougal in 'T.S. Eliot's Metaphysical Dante' in *Dante among the Moderns*, 78.

7 See, for example, G. Hough, 'Dante and Eliot,' *Critical Quarterly,* 116 (Winter 1974), 293-305; R. Ellmann, 'Yeats and Eliot,' *Encounter,* Vol. 25 (1965), 53-55; A. C. Charity, 'T.S. Eliot: The Dantean Recognitions in *The Waste Land*' in *Different Voices* A. D. Moody (ed.) (London, 1974), 117-156 and R. Ellmann, *Eminent Domain* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 94-95.

with Yeatsean allusions especially in the symbolic associations of fire and dance so evident in Yeats's later poetry and in their concern with the process of aging with which Yeats seems to have been obsessed, take these lines for instance:

> From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
> Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
> Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.

It is a curious fact that one of the early drafts of *Little Gidding* was written on a paper containing notes for his lecture on Yeats. The spirit of Yeats, as it were, lingers on and is blended with Brunetto and that of Arnaut Daniel to emerge as 'the familiar compound ghost.' *Little Gidding*, as has been said, is associated with winter and fire, advancing age and pentecostal renewal and written at the time when London was purged by fire ('we only live, only suspire/consumed by either fire or fire'). Eliot's deeply personal symbolism enables him to link the destructive element (the German dive bombers over London with the refining pentecostal fire which refines and redeems, ('the dark dove with the flickering tongue') a brilliant blending with tongues of fire and the enemy bombers with their flames of incandescent terror. The link being the notion that only suffering can release the Christian from sin. But this section or movement of the *Four Quartets* is also concerned with the past as it impinges on the present, the intersection of the timeless with time' - here the intersection of the timeless moment which is at once England and nowhere. The past imposes itself here as it did in the *Divina Commedia* in the language of the dead, for the communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living. The voice of the dead poet lingers in the poetry of the living, as Eliot had recognized in his important essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent.*

In Dante's *Inferno,* the voices of the dead instruct and sometimes admonish the living, as Dante the pilgrim discovers especially in the encounter with Brunetto and Arnaut Daniel, for in the theological sphere of the *Divina Commedia*, all is grist to the mill of providence and even sinners may have a claim to guide the repentant or the righteous. Eliot's encounter with some dead master in the waning dusk is, of course, a deliberate echo of Dante's meeting with Brunetto 'what are you here?' – itself a direct translation of Dante the pilgrim's surprise that the master who taught him how men are immortalized, ('m'insegnavate come l'uom s'etterna'), should be doomed to eternal punishment. The brown baked

features of the ghost in Eliot's poem are deliberately reminiscent of Brunetto ('lo cotto aspetto').

But the sudden shifting of scene to the treading of the pavement 'in a dead patrol' enables the poet to hover between the two worlds, Dante's inferno and the unreal city of wartime London. The words of admonition that follow could have come from Brunetto – they have a Dantean ring about them: 'Last season's fruit is eaten/ and the fulfilled beast shall kick the empty pail' - a peasant image similar to that which Dante uses in making Brunetto warn him against 'quell' ingrato popolo maligno che discese di Fiesole ab antico' and the references to the 'bestie fiesolane.'

There is, however, an abrupt change of tone and shift to the language of poetry itself in the attempt to purify the dialect of the tribe and this is related to the gift of words with which poetry is articulated, looking as Shelley put it before and after – 'urging the mind to aftersight and foresight.' One discerns a marked change of tone and tempo. A disembodied voice disclosing the gifts reserved for age in lines which are remote, but distinct, echoes of Yeats's mature poetry with which Eliot's mind had, at the time, been saturated. Yeats, as is known, was obsessed with the process of aging

> Things said or done long years ago
> or things I did not do or say

whereas 'moving in measure like a dancer' recalls *Among School Children* and the symbolic Byzantium poems, with their celebration of the coalescence of artist and artefact, accentuating the momentary triumph of the spirit over bodily decrepitude, symbolized by the dancer merging with the dance. The spirit of Dante's Brunetto Latini fades into a presence which the perceptive reader identifies, through the Yeatsean allusions, as being that of Yeats who, as Seamus Heaney acutely observes, was always passionately beating on the wall of the physical world in order to provoke an answer from the other side.[8] In a disturbing poem, *A Cold Heaven,* a mood produced in him by gazing at the sky in winter (itself influenced by Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight* in its spasm of consciousness), Yeats asks

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8 Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (London, 1995), 148.

Ah when the ghost begins to quicken
Confusion of the death-bed over,
is it sent out naked on the roads, as the books say, and stricken
by the injustice of the skies for punishment.

Yeats's constantly invoking the supernatural was a means of resisting the obliterating power of death. The spirits of the dead, in this poem as well as in *In Memory of Robert Gregory, To a Shade, All Souls Night,* are conjured up to instruct the living. Eliot must have been conscious of the presence of the dead in Yeats's mature poetry. Yeats's presence makes itself felt in this movement, despite Eliot's disavowal, and is appropriate in a meditative poem about winter, old age, death, time, eternity and the presence of the past. Eliot who during the London blitz served as a civilian 'fire-watcher' or warden, must have experienced the feeling of being and not being himself-between two worlds – assuming, as it were, a double part in what he was later to refer to in *To Criticize the Critic* as 'a hallucinated scene after an air raid.' Probably, Cromwell Road as Mrs Valerie Eliot had suggested.[9]

In his Dublin Memorial lecture (June 1940), Eliot praised Yeats's capacity of 'adaptation to the years' and the exceptional honesty and courage with which he faced old age, resisting the temptation of becoming a dignified public figure, indeed that of becoming as Eliot put it 'a coat rack hung with decorations and distinctions, doing, saying, and even thinking and feeling only what they believe the public expects of them.' Yeats's fine poem on the desertion of his Circus animals, those masterful poetic symbols which were beginning to lose their hold on him, is a philosophical rejection of his high stilts and attempt to come to terms with the 'rag and bone shop of the heart' - an honest reappraisal of himself in old age, or as Eliot puts it in *Little Gidding* 'the rending pain of re-enactment of all that you have done and been.' It was only appropriate that the spirit of Yeats, projected here in Dantean terza rima, without rhyme, should have inspired the central movement of *Little Gidding* which culminates in the complex image of the fire and the rose symbolising Divine love and suffering, an image which Eliot aptly borrows from Dante's *Paradiso.* Richard Ellmann had suggested that the scene might be interpreted as Eliot's kind of *rapprochement* with the spirit of Yeats that troubled him.[10] But the whole passage, to my mind, with its ironic

9 Ackroyd, 81.
10 Ellmann, *Eminent Domain*, 95.

enumeration of the gifts of old age, does not evoke an aura of *rapprochement* to the spirit which still remains 'unappeased and peregrine.' Indeed, Yeats's body lay on a distant shore (in Roquebrune in the South of France) for it could not be brought back because of the war, but his spirit here confronts the poet (as the spirit of Rousseau confronted Shelley in his Dantean unfinished poem *The Triumph Life* in terza rima stanzas which Eliot had greatly admired) to induce a profound dialectic with himself, enabling him 'to become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.'

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